

CURRENT NOTES

The Newsletter For ATARI Owners

Published By

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The Washington Area
Atari
Computer
Enthusiasts

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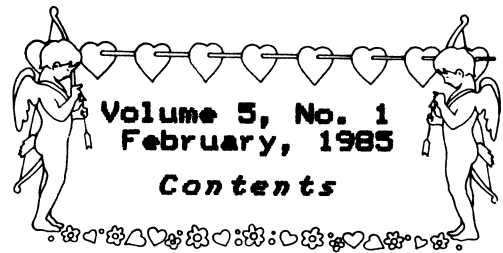
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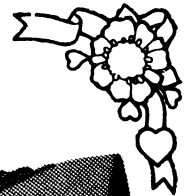
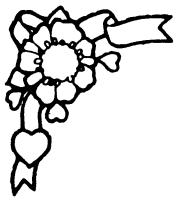
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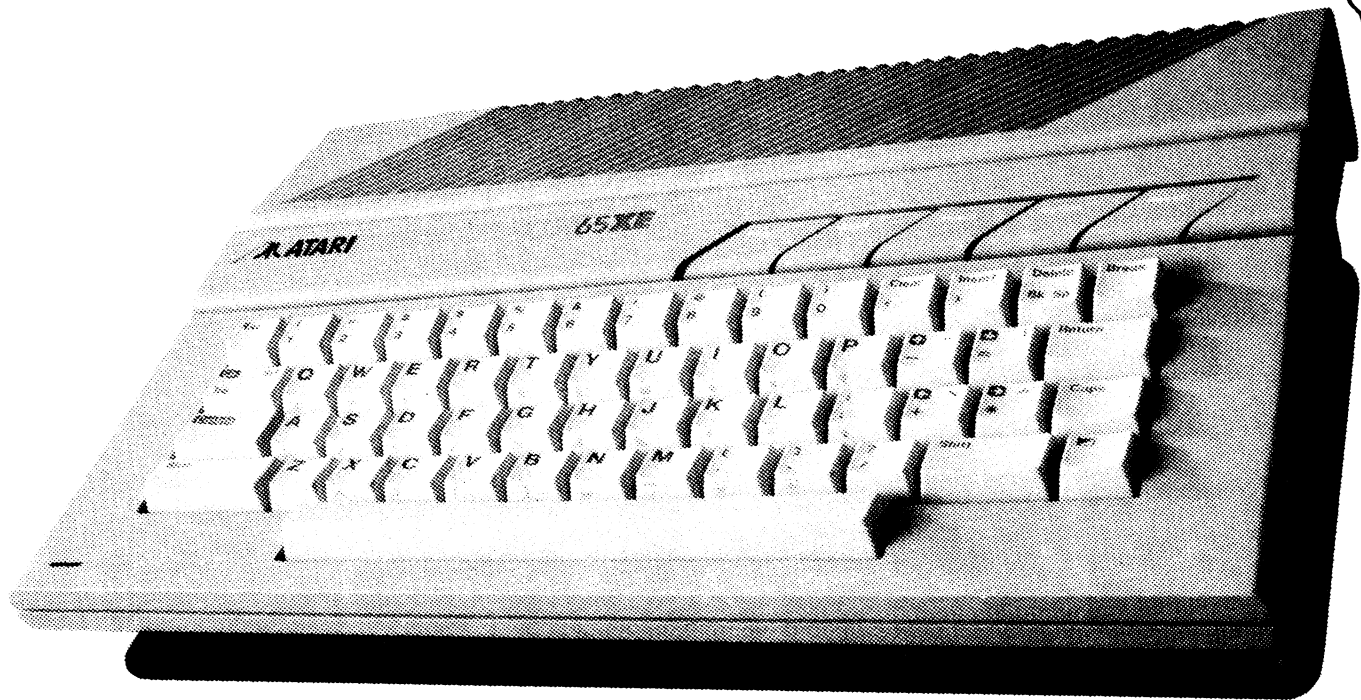
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The New ATARIs

"Power without the Price"



As many of you may already know, ATARI did indeed release new machines at the January Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Anyone fortunate enough to tap into the ANTIC coverage provided on CompuServe was treated to up-to-the-minute detailed reports on the new ATARI machines. These reports were downloaded and placed on several area bulletin boards. So some of you may already have seen all these details. However, if your news is restricted to what you find in the business section of the Washington Post, there's a good deal you do not know. In fact, as of this writing (mid-January) press reports of the new ATARIs remain short and sketchy. Most of the world still does not know that a revolution has begun.

Current Notes, therefore, will start off 1985 with the best information to date on the new Atari machines. To give our readers a taste of the excitement engendered as facts gradually emerged, I am reprinting here several of the excellent ANTIC reports which were released between January 2 and January 10. Russ Wetmore, the author of the popular HOMEPACK from Batteries Included and one of the SYSOPS on CompuServe, gives us his personal observations on the CES. Our own Bruce McLendon (AURA) was lucky enough to attend the meeting and gives us a personal account. Terry White (NOVATARI), tells us about an interview he managed to get with Atari's user group liason, Bryan Kerr. And, of course, look to Bob Kelly's ATARI SCUTTLEBITS, for his usual insightful analysis of the market and economic ramifications of the new Atari. (Editor)

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ANTIC SPECIAL BULLETIN, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION
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**EXCLUSIVE ANTIC PRE-CES ATARI PREVIEW:
5 NEW '85 COMPUTERS -- PLUS
MONITOR WITH 80-COL CARD,
500K DISK DRIVE, PRINTERS, MODEM,
MOUSE...**

Wednesday, January 2

by NAT FRIEDLAND, ANTIC EDITOR

Antic Magazine got a look at the 1985 Atari Computer Line-Up three days before it was due for unveiling at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

This Antic Preview was hosted at the Atari Engineering Center in Sunnyvale by Sig Hartmann, President of Atari's Software Division, and Sam Tramiel, President of the Atari Corp.

Prices for many of the new products were not going to be finalized until 24 hours before CES opens. Manufacturing of the new computers won't begin earlier than March, which means they won't be appearing in the stores until at least May or June.

Atari will be showing three new 8-bit XL-compatible computers at CES. A 128K version, the 130XE, will be priced around \$200. The 65XE, the next-generation 800XL, will cost around \$100.

The keyboards and cases of these machines will be dramatically changed. They will be smaller versions (no 10-key pad) of the spectacular 16-bit computer housing. Inside the XE computers, the circuitry has been simplified and chip functions have been combined. Sam Tramiel said that this will make the XE a more reliable machine than the XL while maintaining 100% compatibility.

There will also be a luggable 8-bit XE that comes with 128K, a small video screen and a disk drive, the package selling for around \$400.

The XE computers will use a new DOS 2.5, which Sam Tramiel said is very similar to the classic DOS 2.05. The new DOS is necessary so that the XEs can accept the new 500K 3 1/2" disk drives as well as the current 1050 drive. The built-in BASIC has not been changed.

Hartmann & Tramiel brought up and agreed upon the necessity of exchanging DOS 2.5 for the DOS 3 packaged in hundreds of thousands of new 800XLs sold at Xmas. They were very open to Antic's suggestion that DOS 2.5 be uploaded onto the CompuServe Atari SIG and distributed to users' groups as soon as it's finalized.

Hartmann also proposed that Antic assemble users questions via CompuServe each month and turn them in to him. He promised prompt answers from Atari's top management through Antic. Sam Tramiel was enthusiastic about the arrangement and Antic is starting it right now! Upload your questions for Atari on the Antic Electronic I/O Board and we'll be online with the first round of answers before the end of January.

Good news that many of us have been waiting for! The XE 128K computer will maintain an open parallel bus for plug-in peripherals. The PBI will even be improved over the

current XL format -- with improved timing and a built-in +- 5 volt power amplification.

The last-minute decision to continue the PBI came at an engineering meeting called by Sam Tramiel in response to Antic's write-in campaign on CompuServe's SIG#ATARI.

As for the two new 16-bit machines, they can be described in one word -- phenomenal.

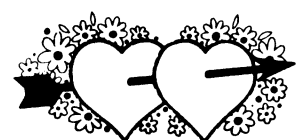
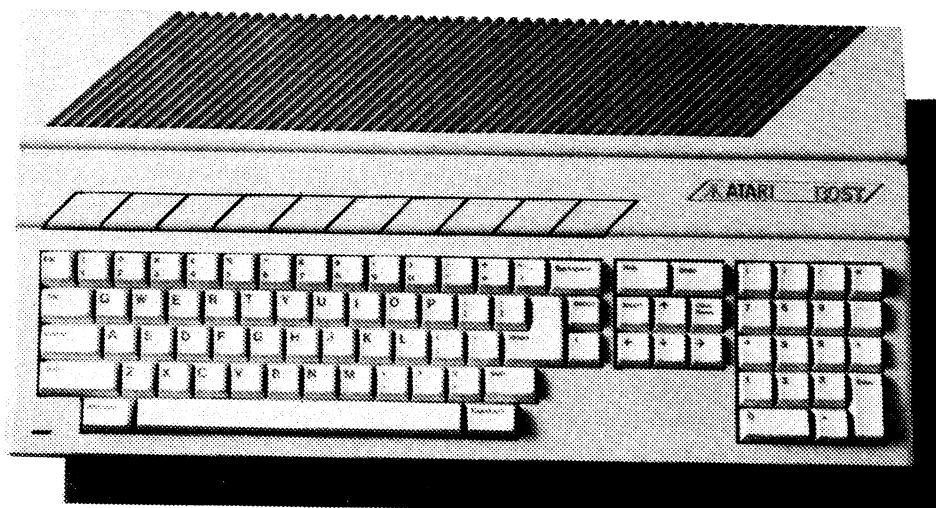
The 130ST is a non-expandable 128K computer and the 520ST carries 512K, that's the only difference between them. They both use the Motorola 68000 chip which is also in the Apple Macintosh. They both use Digital Research's super-fast Macintosh-like GEM user interface, which sits on top of DR's CP/M 68K operating system.

Each model also has 196K built-in ROM containing GEM and CP/M 68K. An Atari mouse will be available to run GEM's icon menus. Both computers will be capable of running the highly-rated DR version of Logo. C or Pascal will be the development languages of choice.

The state-of-the-art keyboard for the 16-bit machines includes: full selectric-style key layout, 10-key number pad, cursor pad with Help and Undo keys, and 10 function keys. The entire back of the casing is honeycombed with ports, including: parallel and serial interfaces, MIDI musical interface, PBI, etc.

The one sad note at Antic's preview was that the long-rumored AMIE 16-voice sound chip was not totally ready for production yet. The AMIE, which is said to emulate human speech and singing with unprecedented accuracy, will be incorporated into the '85 Atari line later in the spring and will be identified by adding the letter M to 8-bit and 16-bit models that include it.

Another '85 breakthrough is Atari's sleek, compact 3 1/2" disk drive with 500K storage capacity. Sam Tramiel said this drive will be in the incredibly low price range of \$100. Tramiel told Antic that the 500K drive, which uses the same sturdy 3 1/2" disks as the Macintosh, will be compatible with both the 16-bit and 8-bit computers.



"We've had long discussions about the issue of disk compatibility," said Tramiel. "But our conclusion is that we're going to strongly encourage software developers to bring out their new programs primarily on 3 1/2" format. At the low price we'll be selling the new drive for -- frankly 8-bit users would be foolish not to eventually upgrade to a far superior product and format."

However, the current floppy-5 1/4" 1050 disk drive will continue to be manufactured as long as there is a market for it.

In yet another new move, Atari will be showing a wide line of printers and monitors, which will be aggressively marketed for use with IBM and Apple computers as well as Ataris. When asked who was actually manufacturing these new peripherals, Sam Tramiel laughed and said, "Japan Inc."

The Atari printers -- all aggressively low-priced -- will include a 12-cps daisywheel, an 80-cps dot-matrix, and three \$50-100 thermal transfer models, including one that prints in color.

The monitors include a 12" monochrome for about \$100 -- with a built-in 80-column card for the XE and XL 8-bit series -- and a 14" color monitor for about \$200 which will compete with the popular Commodore color unit.

A 640x200 resolution RGB Analog model capable of displaying 512 colors will sell for around \$300. There will also be a \$150 high-resolution 640x400 monochrome model for the ST series.

Atari also plans to show a monitor with a built-in floppy disk drive, plus a low-cost (around \$50) 300-baud modem bundled with software for uploading and downloading.

Software president Hartmann described Atari's goal as "switching from a computer game company to a microcomputer company." He said that Atari Software will primarily publish entertaining and easy-to-use productivity programs. "We'll be very selective about games, only publishing games that we believe have a real chance to become major hits."

By the day before CES, Hartmann expected to sign the contract for Atari to bring out an integrated program comparable to Lotus 1-2-3 -- but with code so compacted that it will run on 64K. If this deal is finalized in time, Antic Online will upload a description of the product from CES.

Also under development is AtariWriter Plus, which will include integrated mailmerge and spelling checker. It is to all run on one disk at 128K.

Hartmann said he is determined to reach out for user group feedback in the fast-moving software market. He specifically wants major users groups to act as beta testers for new Atari software.

As a first step towards this, Hartmann said he will bring top Atari executives to meet with users' group officers at

the special invitational Worldwide Users Network meeting which Antic will host at our offices during the West Coast Computer Fair in March.

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Atari Corp. Unveils New Products and Image Saturday, 5 January

by MICHAEL CIRAOLO, Assoc. Ed., Antic

Las Vegas--The new Atari Corp. unveiled a new product line and a new image today--all intended to compete with Apple and IBM.

"We are not a game company. We are a microcomputer company," said Sig Hartmann, president of Atari Software, at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show. "We will produce productivity software and educational material."

Atari will now carry complete lines of 8-bit and 16-bit machines, as well as an array of printers, monitors and other peripherals intended for users of Atari, Apple, IBM, Commodore and Texas Instruments equipment.

The XE line of 8-bit personal computers will include a portable 64K machine with built-in 5" monitor and 3-1/2 inch disk drive priced under \$400, a 128K computer priced under \$200, and a redressed version of the 800XL priced around \$100. All are said to be compatible with existing Atari software. Two 16-bit computers, the 130ST and 520ST, are based on an 8 MHz MC68000 microprocessor, according to the company's announcement.

Packaged in sleek, low-profile cases similar to the Apple IIc case, the long-awaited "Jackintosh" Atari ST computers come with 128K RAM or 512K RAM, priced under \$400 and \$600 respectively.

Today's press conference was introduced by Nevada governor Richard Bryan, who has been negotiating with Atari President Jack Tramiel to establish an Atari semiconductor factory in Nevada.

Negotiations for such an Atari plant are going well, according to Jack Tramiel, but have not been finalized.

Atari will also be actively entering the computer education area, traditionally the domain of Apple, according to Hartmann.

According to Atari, both machines will have 32K bit-mapped screens. There will be a choice of three graphics modes: a 320 x 200 pixel, 16-color mode, a 640 x 200 pixel, 4-color mode, and a monochrome 640 x 400 pixel mode.

Atari claims both machines will have a range of 512 colors, with 8 levels each of red, green and blue.

According to Atari, both computers will have a special sound chip capable of producing controllable frequencies from 30 Hz to supersonic. There will be three channels, with separate frequency and volume control. Both machines will have interfaces to Musical Instrument Digital Interface.

The central processing units feature 8 32-bit data registers, 8 32-bit address registers, a 16-bit data bus, and a 24-bit address bus, according to Atari.

The operating system uses a graphics kernel developed by Digital Research (Pacific Grove, California), and the Graphics Environment Manager (GEM) user interface from the same company.

The GEM gives users access to icons, windows, mouse control, a memory management system and a real-time clock. Atari claims that both machines have a Centronics port, an RS232 port, interfaces for disk controllers, joysticks and mice. In addition, there are apparently four video ports --television, composite video, RGB and high-resolution monochrome.

According to Atari's director of marketing, James Copland, the XE machines will be shipped "as soon as the old 800XLs are out of the pipeline," and the 16-bit computers will be on store shelves by April 1. The company is taking orders now.

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New EPYX and LUCASFILM Partnership

Saturday, January 5

by **MICHAEL CIRAULO, Assoc. Editor, Antic**

Las Vegas--A new partnership was announced today as Epyx Software unveiled two games from Lucasfilm for the Atari market.

BALLBLAZER and RESCUE ON FRACTALUS, originally developed by Lucasfilm for the old Atari Inc, will now be marketed on 64K disks at a suggested retail price between \$29 and \$39, according to Epyx marketing director Robert Botch.

Although the two games were just announced, Epyx and Lucasfilm discussed a partnership for several months, signing the final agreement on New Year's Day, Botch said.

Both games were developed over six months ago, and there are numerous bootlegged copies around the country. However, those copies are not final products and differ from the games now being sold, said Botch.

Botch promised that the new partnership will produce further games from Lucasfilm. Two Atari games are currently under development and will be shown in June, he said.

What can we expect next? "All I can say is that they will be in the Lucas style --graphically different from anything currently on the market."

ANTIC SPECIAL BULLETIN, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF ANTIC PUBLISHING INC.

Tramiel Opens Atari Up To Software Artists

Sunday, 6 January

by **MICHAEL CIRAULO, Assoc Editor, Antic**

Las Vegas--Atari chief Jack Tramiel promised the Software Publishers Association that he would open Atari up to software developers.

"I'll open the new Atari machines up the way Apple opened up the Apple II," Tramiel said. "I need your help, and will give you any support you need."

Tramiel promised technical and financial support for those writing software for his new ST line of 16-bit, 68000-based personal computers.

The former head of Commodore also said he would try to put the new ST machines in the hands of software developers by the end of January, three months before the computers are available on retail store shelves.

Software publishers reacted with a wait-and-see, yet warm attitude to Tramiel's announcement.

Tramiel said he was expecting entertainment, business, educational and scientific software.

"We are serving everyone," Tramiel said, stressing that the ST line was a series of personal computers, not home machines.

Tramiel said he would give financial support to "any young man with good ideas who is starting a business. I'll give him some money for the work he's doing for us."

When asked about continued support for the 8-bit XE series, Tramiel told publishers that he would support an entire line of XE computers and peripherals as long as the consumer continued buying them.

Tramiel said that he had been working with Digital Research for over nine months on the ST design. He stated that Tramiel Technologies Ltd. would have brought the ST series to market, even if he had not bought Atari from Warner Communications. Tramiel said that the sophisticated consumer was "bored with the 6502 technology," and that the ST series was the "most exciting upgrade path" available at the lowest possible price.

At the end of the conference, Tramiel answered a question regarding disk drives with a very surprising quote. "Atari will be introducing a 15 Megabyte hard disk compatible for the ST series for under \$400 before June CES."

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ANTIC SPECIAL BULLETIN, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF ANTIC PUBLISHING INC.

CES-ATARI FINAL WRAP-UP:

Hardware Specs

Thursday, 10 January

by NAT FRIEDLAND, Antic Editor

LAS VEGAS - The January 1985 CES show looked like the arrival of vindication for those who believed in the Atari Computer. The spectacular hardware and software shown at the crowded Atari exhibit was clearly superior and dramatically lower priced than anything brought by Commodore or the Japanese MSX contingent.

Model numbers - and to some extent, prices - still seem to be in a state of flux. But here is the best information ANTIC has as of now.

16-BIT COMPUTERS - The 130ST (128K) is \$399. A suddenly announced 260ST (256K) will be \$499. And the top of the line 520ST (512K) is \$599. The ST operating environment, GEM by Digital Research, will make it easy for software developers to transport programs originally written for the Macintosh and IBM PC environments.

8-BIT COMPUTERS - The 65XE which replaces the 800XL will continue at under \$120. The 130XE is "well under \$200" - or approaching \$150. We also had our first look at the 65XEP luggable, under \$400, including a 3 1/2" disk drive and a very clear 5" green monitor. These computers are all compatible with Atari's earlier 8-bits. When the polyphonic AMIE sound chip is finished around March, it's supposed to go into an alternate 64K machine to be called the 65XEM.

DELIVERY DATES for everything in this story is supposed to fall between 30 days and the start of the second quarter.

PRINTERS - \$150 for the slow (12 cps) but true letter-quality daisywheel, \$150 for the 80 cps dot matrix that produces graphics virtually as sharp as the Apple Imagewriter.

\$150 for the 50 cps non-impact color printer that produces very clear text, and \$99 for a black-only 20-cps non-impact model. All of these printers seem much sturdier and more professional than any printer that has ever carried the Atari name. They all work with both the 8-bit and the 16-bit lines, under different interfaces and model numbers.

In fact, Atari printers and monitors will now be marketed for IBM, Apple, and Commodore computers, under the Atarisoft name.

MONITORS - The XC1411 composite color 14" is under \$200. The XM128, about \$150, is the crisp 12" green monitor with built-in 80-column card that works with the new Atari software on XE computers. Specifically for the 16-bit ST line is the very impressive 12" RGB analog color monitor,

SC1224 under \$300, that's capable of showing 512 colors on screen. You can also get this model with a built-in 3 1/2" disk drive attachment. And there's an extra high resolution monochrome monitor, the SM124, for the STs at under \$200. The Atari exhibit area featured a wall of color monitors, which often displayed the spectacular graphics demos which Atari has been making available to users groups. Doug Crockford's BALL1 has been put on CompuServe by ANTIC. And Jim St.Louis' & Russ Karas' animated high-res robot and rocket ship are starting to be seen nationwide.

DISK DRIVES - The 500K SF354 3 1/2" drive is under \$200. And they are now also talking about a 250K 3 1/2" drive, the SF324, for around \$150. Not yet shown was the under-\$600 SH317 harddisk with 10MB, and there's also some discussion of a 15MB hard disk. Speed of all these new drives is announced as a phenomenal 1.3 megabytes per second for the STs. For the XEs they're hoping to boost the speed to 30,000 from the current 19,200. The 1050 disk drive will be gradually replaced for 5 1/4" floppies by the compatible XF521, around \$150, which has true double density and matches the new XE look. The new compatible Disk Operating System 2.5 was developed by Bill Wilkinson of OSS, the father of Atari DOS.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS - The \$49.95 XM301 direct-connect 300-baud modem is slightly larger than a cigarette pack and comes bundled with software for uploading and downloading. The long-awaited Learning Phone cartridge for accessing Plato was featured, in-store availability should begin in February and the price may be as low as \$25. The Plato cartridge was also being demonstrated with MPP's new low-cost 1,200-baud modem.

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ANTIC SPECIAL BULLETIN, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF ANTIC PUBLISHING INC.

Software Breakthroughs

10 January 1985

by NAT FRIEDLAND, Antic Editor

LAS VEGAS- Atari's CES software was in its own right as spectacular as the hardware breakthroughs on display. The star attraction was undoubtedly INFINITY -- which is the next generation of sleek, powerful integrated programs.

Infinity has specs that are more than a match for Lotus 1-2-3 and Symphony. Yet it can run in as little as 64K (even on the old 800) with only the loss of a few extra features. And incredibly, it will be sold at only \$49.95 for 8-bit Ataris, the 16-bit version will be about \$70.

The Tramiel Atari Corp. has shown that it is serious about holding software prices to \$49.95, which is what virtually all the advanced productivity software described in this article will cost.

I realize that INFINITY sounds almost too good to be true. But Antic has seen it in operation. On one disk it contains a spreadsheet, relational database, a word

processor that looks like MacWrite, a telecommunications package, graphics, icons and pull-down menus, and integrated printing. It runs in virtual memory, which means that file size is more dependent on disk capacity than on RAM.

Infinity will support the upcoming Atari local area networking (LAN) capability. And it includes multitasking -- up to 6 simultaneous operations on the ST series, 3 on the 130 XE and 2 on the 65XE.

Vincent Garafolo of Cambridge's Matrix Software, developers of Infinity, explained that they were able to get so much into a 64K memory program by two-step "optimizing" of the assembly language compilation. This procedure is usually only used in advanced military and government software.

"Most software companies don't do optimization because it's so tedious, even though it's possible to drastically reduce the size of most programs," explained Garafolo. "You don't have to be a programming genius to optimize. You just have to be willing to put in a few hundred hours of boring, painstaking line-by-line analysis."

Other impressive new software from Atari includes SILENT BUTLER, a personal finance program that balances multiple checking and credit card accounts, and tracks tax deductions. It's most unique feature is the ability to print on your own personalized checks, using a plastic check-holder that fits into your printer.

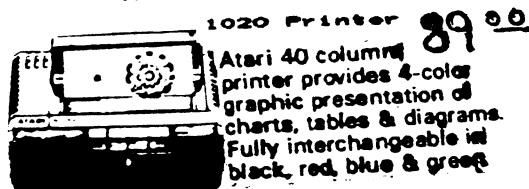
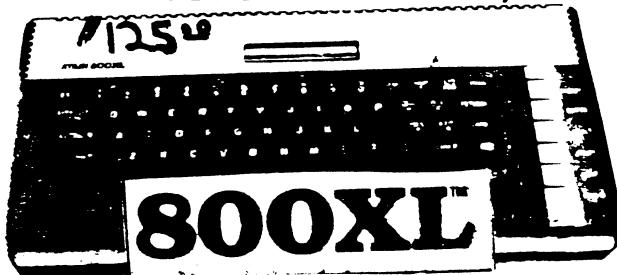
SHOPKEEPER is an easy-to-use small business accounting package that also tracks inventory and generally emulates an electronic cash register. It also compiles daily reports which will be automatically transferable to the upcoming (2nd quarter) general ledger module. There will be six modules in the series.

Song Painter is a very user-friendly music construction program that replaces standard musical notation with self-explanatory colored line patterns and icons. Its three instrumental voices can be controlled almost entirely from the joystick.

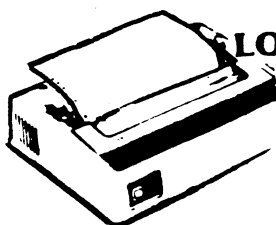
In another Atari musical development, the in/out MIDI ports on the ST computers were being demonstrated driving the new Casio CZ101 \$499 synthesizer.

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Personal Impressions of Winter CES, 1985

Saturday, 12 January

by Russ Wetmore

[Russ Wetmore is the author of HOMEPAK and one of the CompuServe ATARI-SIG SYSOPs. Russ filed this report on the CompuServe data library. Editor.]

Jack Tramiel seems to have done it again. Any doubts I had regarding Atari's (at least short term) future have been alleviated for now. The "New" Atari came out fighting at CES, aggressively showing new product with ridiculously low prices, considering market precedent.

Commodore's showing was almost embarrassing. The long awaited Amiga computer was nowhere to be found. The new Commodore 128, although in a much prettier case than its predecessor, the 64, seems like a case of way too little, (way)

too late. Both the Plus-4 and Commodore 16 were in evidence, but were roundly ignored. Their new laptop computer seemed interesting, but with total incompatibility with their current software and with demonstrations consisting of very strained, canned demos I can't call it anything other than an oddity just yet.

The traffic in both booths told the tale - I had absolutely no problem inspecting the new Commodore product, but had to wait until almost the end of the show to get close enough to see anything in the Atari booth. The Atari booth was wall to wall people throughout the show.

What do I think of the new Atari computers? Well, the XE line seems like a solid enhancement of the old 800's. The new 3 1/2" drives have been long overdue (although the only XE that had the new drive running on it was the mockup of the XE portable, of which I was told was a one-of-a-kind prototype.) The lack of parallel bus (shouldn't) be a problem - an Atari engineer told me that the cartridge port had been extended to include enough signals that adapters for products utilizing the current 800XL parallel bus should be easy to create. I don't particularly care for the feel of the new keyboard, but the case is pretty, and hey! - for \$100 I can live with it.

The new ST line, though, is where Atari's future lies. For "under \$400" the potential of the 130ST is enormous. ANTIC has done a great job relating the relative merits of the ST line, so I won't duplicate them here. I must say in all honesty that the GEM based software I saw running was very canned, and very prone to failure - one demonstrator was constantly turning a demo 130ST off and on to reset it after program crashes. But, given the amount of time Atari's engineers had to get the demos up and running before the show, I'm a little amazed that there were as few problems as there were. One 130ST running a FORTH model was doing some remarkable things through its MIDI interface, driving a synthesizer with a very impressive demo.

The other Atari hardware being shown consisted of a printer (I hesitate to keep saying "low-cost" because <everything> they showed was inexpensive), a plotter, some very nice monitors (monochrome, composite color and RGB) and a new modem that is supposed to look like an 835/1030 to the computer, is hopefully much more reliable, and would fit in your pocket. All looked like they were constructed very well, and the value for the dollar is tremendous.

The Tramiels were conspicuous by their <presence>. While the senior Tramiel and his son Sam spent most of their time politicking, Leonard Tramiel was at most times available at the booth to answer questions and sell the merits of the new products, as well as demonstrate them. One of the things I was most impressed by was their collective enthusiasm - the "vision" seems to have returned to Atari.

The competition? Well, I've already described Commodore's showing. (They <did> have a new modem that seemed very exciting, especially for the price, but as it hasn't been formally announced to the best of my knowledge, I can't comment.) Rumors were flying at the show as to Apple and IBM's intentions given Atari's showing. Look for Apple to drastically reduce the prices on their "32-bit" line, and a "color Mac" announcement seems imminent.

I would guess that IBM also reduces the prices on their stock PC, although not as much as Apple, given their success with price reductions with the PCjr and the more fierce competition. We all know that IBM marches to their own drummer, though, so your guess is as good as mine.

Some other interesting tidbits: Music programs (and music interfaces) seemed to be in vogue at the show. The West Hall, which is where most of the computer-related exhibits were located, sounded like a concert hall with everyone trying to out-play each other. I counted three companies with MIDI interfaces (for Commodore) and at least 6 others with dedicated music programs (again, mostly Commodore.)

John Demar's company, Quantum Microsystems, Inc., was showing their new R:Link serial interface and Q*Modem low cost 300 baud modem. Both products seem very nice. The Q*Modem has a very usable terminal built in, with some very neat graphic features, as well as an auto-dial directory and help prompts.

Nintendo suprized everybody by showing their new "game" machine. Honestly, it has some cute graphics capabilities, but a game machine in 1985? Give me a break.

There were a number of companies with "personal" robots. Gag. For what they're capable of doing (or I should say, what they're <incapable> of) I'll wait another couple of years.

Sinclair was showing (again) their cheap 68000 computer. Emphasis on the word "cheap." They still have the slowest word processor known to man, supposedly

written in machine code but as slow as a poorly written BASIC program. Their mini-television was nice, though.

Infocom held a party the likes of which I'll never forget. They rented out the old Las Vegas Presley mansion and staged a murder. Honest to God. It was a real live "whodunnit" held to promote one of their new adventure games, Suspect. The actors were top-notch, and I can't remember when I've had so much fun.

Epson had a whole slew of new printers on display, as well as <their> new mini-television. They followed Atari's lead and changed the numbers on all of their products. (I'll be calling the 65XE an "800" absent mindedly for months, I bet.) There weren't any great speed or performance breakthroughs on the new printers - the emphasis was placed on tying certain printers specifically to certain computers. No doubt the reason was to solve the problem of "Does that printer work with <my> computer?"

The Coleco booth was a laugh. With ColecoVision dying out and the Adam computer sold, the most interesting thing was probably the Cabbage Patch Dolls they had strewn about.

That's about all I can remember at one sitting. All in all, I was <very> impressed by the new Atari line, but am still maintaining a "wait and see" attitude until they are released. If Mr. Tramiel can hold the prices to their announced levels, can get the products out fast enough, and <IF> we don't see another quality control fiasco that plagued old Commodore product, then Atari has some winners on their hands. Let's hope they do well.

SECRET SUNNYVALE CORRESPONDENT

CNR: Well, we've been to the CES in Las Vegas and seen it all. So, is there anything else?

SSC: YES! Everything you saw, both hardware and software will be available during the month of APRIL. Even our 40/80 column green-screen monitor (for less than \$200) will be out. This monitor has built-in firmware that switches to 80-column mode. The new ATARIWRITER II takes advantage of this.

CNR: What are the improvements in the new ATARIWRITER II package?

SSC: All the improvements that have been suggested are included here; like the 'ProofReader' (a built in spelling checker) and printer drivers. Plus, many new options and compatibilities we'll soon be advertising.

CNR: What about some of the new products you showed, but had no data sheets to distribute; like INFINITY and the color printers?

SSC: INFINITY is a Lotus 1-2-3 type product we demonstrated in our booth. Imagine a Lotus spreadsheet

that from the upper-left to lower-right corner requires 72k. Well, INFINITY does the same work, same dimension spreadsheet in 8k! From Matrix Software, this is the best 8-bit CPU package that will run in a 64k machine. And it will sell for \$50! This will also be out by April. In fact, we plan to offer ALL future 8-bit software for no more than \$50 per package!

As for the color printers, there are several we're looking at very close. What we're trying to find are multiple support products. This means that many software products will be able to use the hardware so that we don't have to worry so much about compatibility. Just hang on 'til April. Have I mislead you or disappointed you yet?

We also have a modem with software that supports uploading and downloading. If you want to customize the routines, the software has the 'hooks' and includes comments on just how to get the program to perform the way you want.

CNR: We saw the 3.5" micro disk drive others are using. Can some of us 'old timers' get in on the new technology without scrapping our beloved 800's?

SSC: Yes, we'll be releasing DOS 2.5 which looks and works like 2.0. Basically, we found that the software world was supporting 2.0 and the 3.0 people were left out in the cold. DOS 3.0 was just not efficient; a little too funky. So, DOS 2.5 not only permits the firmware to work with the new disk drives, but will also access the extended format of DOS 3.0 and take advantage of the extra memory in your 130XE for a RAM-disk! Not bad for just a DOS, eh?

CNR: So now that you've got us with our checkbooks open, where can we go in April to find this stuff?

SSC: We've contacted the major 'mass merchandizers' and you should be seeing ALL these products in places like Sears, K-Mart, Toys-R-Us and Montgomery Wards in your area. The CES (Consumer Electronic Show) has a summer session which will be held in Chicago during early June. We should be able to show you ALL the latest in product support then.

CNR: I know I've been patient with you and have held out waiting for this news. I guess you'd like to tell the others, "I told you so", huh?

SSC: Like I said, keep the faith. Never fear, ATARI's here!

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If you are moving, remember to send a change of address notice to your club or directly to CURRENT NOTES. Normally, second class mail is not forwarded and without the correct address you will not receive your issue of CURRENT NOTES. Send your new address to John Lauer, 8127 Heatherton Lane, #204, Vienna, VA 22180.

CES SPECIAL REPORT

by Bruce McLendon

Imagine a building so large you couldn't see any one wall from the opposite side. Got it? The Consumer Electronic Show held in Las Vegas, Nevada was in such a building; they call it their convention center. Not only is there an 'East Hall' and a 'West Hall', but there were so many exhibits that they were spread out among four neighboring hotels!!

Chris Amori (ACA) and I arrived a day early because we had to: The hotel and airline reservations were sold out for Friday forward. Las Vegas, as a city apart from the gambling, is still a curious collection of people. But when it came time to board the shuttle bus for a 15 minute ride, you saw even more astonishing sights! Remember now, you had to be IN the business of electronics -- either a retail merchant (like Chris), or a consultant, advertising exec, manufacturer and the like. We saw a wide variety of ages dressed in a wide variety of clothes, and yet they, somehow, finagled their way through the screening for the \$10 entrance exam. You had to show a business card and driver's license. You really wondered about some of the people, men AND women, wearing smelly sweat-shirts and scruffy blue jeans with holes in them!

So, Chris and I seemed to have a show on the way to the show. Two for the price of one? Anyway, amongst all the people extending their necks around, over and into the various display booths, the largest crowd had gathered at the carpeted edge of the 'New Atari' corporation. A broad ribbon, blocking the entrance to a very large podium with four dozen monitors mounted in its walls, was, at this moment, protected by several armed guards. The governor of Nevada would cut this ribbon at 10:45 am - almost two hours from now! The crowd swelled and it was difficult to get a glimpse of the man himself, Jack Tramiel. With speeches and demonstrations, at almost a dozen kiosks, ATARI was the busiest place that morning and afternoon. Software from almost every major manufacturer lined the walls to tell everyone that ATARI was well supported. The new machines were crowded with people wanting to just touch a key, or roll a mouse, or poke at a monitor. You'll have to see the slides (see AURA club notes) to appreciate some of the size of this place and ATARI's booth, as well.

The rest of the show consisted of many computer companies, and software manufacturers. But this was just in one hall! We toured through the areas of electronic watches, kitchen appliances, satellite TV stations and all sorts of new car stereos and anti-theft systems. Did you know you can now put a Compact Disk player in your car? The models (female and mechanical) were impressive and showed that the amount of technology that we have at our disposal is just overwhelming! Video disks, video tapes, video players, video rental vending machines, video juke boxes. Almost any combination of wild ideas could probably be found here -- and someone would buy it and sell a bundle of them. These guys would take orders on the spot. You could easily spend your lifetime income and not have but a fraction of what was offered.

(Continued on Page 13)

A Chat with Atari's Bryan Kerr

by Terry White

Here I was sitting in the lobby of the new Atari Corp, waiting to pick up my Atari press release as distributed at the CES. Bryan Kerr, the User Group Liason here, had promised to leave the packet at the guard's desk.

Earlier in the day, I had talked with Bryan on the phone. Our conversation started off with my discussing the size of the Washington area Atari user groups. Yes, he knew of us and how important our, and other, user groups were. That's when our conversation stepped up. (And I thought I became excited when talking about Atari). Bryan took off like a shot and hardly stopped talking for at least ten minutes. Writer's cramp set in quickly but I tried to jot down everything I could.

His main point was for me to stress the following: he has envisioned, and is actively promoting, the idea of a national user group association. Except for normal expenses, he has been granted no funds to do this from within Atari. Atari doesn't want to appear to outsiders that they are influencing any user group ideas or vice versa. A national user group would be the sieve through which the local Atari groups could pass their information and comments on to Atari. Bryan doesn't have the time to talk to all three hundred or so groups individually. But, he insisted, Atari definitely wants user group input. If this national association were to sift out and organize any information, it would mean better future hardware and software support for us the users.

A national association could organize and coordinate national shows meetings, media events, etc. In return, Atari would provide additional support to the user groups. Bryan suggested several examples of user group support: (1) at least two pages in the Atari Explorer magazine including schedules dates, etc., (2) quicker release of information on new and future products, (3) a more forceful voice to Atari management, (4) Atari trinkets, logos, etc., in quantity (there is a warehouse full of the stuff), and (5) show booths and equipment for use at promotional events.

Bryan recommends that \$2 of club membership fees go to supporting this national association. His target is for an initial meeting by June of this year, although he'd prefer to have a meeting within the next two to three months.

An international users group is envisioned further down the road. This group would need professional staffing for such a massive undertaking.

While I sat there reflecting on the information from that earlier phone call, I was, to say the least, very impressed that the user groups had such an enthusiastic liason. Then, to my surprise, who should appear but Bryan. I did get a chance to meet him face-to-face afterall. Here was a guy as young as I am with tons of enthusiasm. This was great to see.

After taking some pictures in front of Atari headquarters (after all, I didn't know when I'd be back this way again), we talked about the attitude of independent dealers. They were seeing all the media hype about Atari wanting to sell mainly to mass merchandisers. The independents were having visions of the old Atari rekindling. Bryan said Atari would definitely not ignore the independents. But they would have to work hard at selling service and support. Jack Tramiel wants the computers out there as soon as possible at the right price. And the "right price" is one that is very competitive.

Bryan said that if the independents have a problem with their distributor, they should tell Atari directly and loudly. They can call David Harris, Greg Pratt, or Sam Tramiel if there is a complaint. Bryan also said that "we don't want any of the previous problems."

For the rest of the day, I contemplated the various ideas discussed about Atari and user groups. It is my belief that the new Atari Corp. is being honest in its discussions about user group support. After having perused the press release package of photos and technical specs on the new products, it appears that Jack Tramiel is on his way to becoming even more of a legend in his own lifetime. Good luck to Atari and good luck to Bryan. I'm sure he'll be very busy for a long time with this project. So will we.

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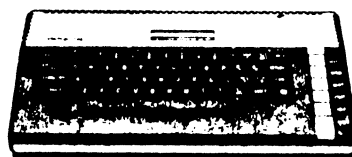
Special Report (Continued from page 12)

No less than five companies shoved miniature color TVs! Casio even had a wall-mounted unit with an outstanding picture! If you don't have remote control over your home entertainment system, you're just not in step with what can give you the ultimate in leisure activity and enjoyment.

Magazines from so many industries you'd never think would have a magazine to publish; and in color with glossy pages, too! Surveys and results, reviews and recommendations. Chris and I packed up a 50-pound bag of the stuff and headed home. I'm sure the summer show in Chicago during the month of June will be just as overwhelming! See you then?



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ATARI SCUTTLEBITS

Bob Kelly

The new Atari computers have been introduced and are soon to be on the shelves. I am reminded of a quote from Kipling:

"Your glazing is new and your plumbing strange,
But otherwise I perceive no change;
And in less than a month, if you do as I bid,
I'd learn you to build me a Pyramid"

Although it has taken more than a month, Jack Tramiel and his principle lieutenants have performed a remarkable feat over the last six to nine months. Let's try to move away from the hype surrounding the introduction of the new computers and examine the strategy employed by Atari to arrive at where they are today. A strategy which somewhat confused and confounded the competition and the market analysts/print media who thought the "new" Atari would be on its knees by now.

Past Events

Mr. Tramiel has not blown the dust off his new desk at Atari when Commodore bought Amiga. Immediately, the press pronounced this event as having dire consequences for Atari. Atari filed a law suit against Commodore, who bought Amiga, basically on the contention that Amiga was supposed to be developing a chip for Atari (they had pulled out of the deal just prior to the take-over by Commodore). I won't go into all the details of what the "market analysts" were predicting but some of my past columns reflect their comments. Suffice it to say, many thought this move by Commodore blocked any moves by Tramiel to introduce a new line of computers in the near term. They were wrong. The new computers are here and it is now known that they were under development prior to Tramiel's consideration to buy Atari (this also applies to the GEM system developed by DRI).

Once the above situation had been analysed into the ground, a new one popped up. Atari was experiencing a liquidity (cash) crisis, according to the press. Unless Warner or someone came to the rescue (there were doubts expressed that anyone would), Mr. Tramiel was going to take his marbles (or should I say microprocessors) home and let Atari go under. Almost immediately, some software firms as well as other suppliers filed suit against Atari for non-payment of alleged services they performed. The irony was that the press generally did not report to the public that some of these suits were brought by firms that were experiencing financial difficulties. Atari countered that some of the bills were, in my non-legal terminology, inflated. Events, looked dim again to the "market analysts". In the end, Warner Communications arranged/assisted in the financing for Atari. The crisis atmosphere dissipated in the press momentarily, but only momentarily. Articles persisted that Atari's days could be numbered, even up to early January, 1985.

It surprised me then, as it does now, that anyone cannot understand why Warner had to help Atari. Atari's

short-term cash needs were relatively small, according to my sources, and after all, Warner had to protect it's 240 million dollar plus investment. Further, Warner, if Atari succeeds, can purchase over 30% of the corporation at a very favorable price. Warner had to come to the conclusion, on any standard risk/benefit assessment, that Atari's short-term cash needs were minimal compared to the significant gain if Tramiel succeeded.

Finally, despite Tramiel's business track record, many in the electronics industry chose to interpret the reduction in price of the 800XL as a "fire sale" which indicated they were unloading stock and in desperate need of cash to finance new product development. While increased sales of one's product certainly improves cash flow, it also accomplishes something equally important - market penetration, and in turn, public recognition as a viable corporate entity. According to the few reports available at the time this column was written (early January), Atari was hard-pressed to keep up with demand over the holiday season and many software companies found the demand for Atari software extraordinary (see my December column for the reasons why this occurred). Bluntly, a slight aside, the reason why some software companies are going under is that they can't spell "market strategy", let alone implement one. Most would benefit from a good course in Economics -- or better yet, from working for Tramiel for a couple of months.

Market Strategy

From the above, it is my opinion that Atari implemented a brilliant strategy. The key points of which, I believe, were:

1. No one, but no one, talks to the press except the V.P. for Marketing (James Copland), and when this rule was to be violated, Atari would pick its spots (more on this later). Atari would not supply false information which may impact negatively upon the corporation at a later date. Let the press create their own rumors and "instant" analyses. The hurdles to overcome were and remain real enough for Tramiel and Atari - keep them internal to the organization. In simple terms, the press would keep itself, and hopefully the competition, diverted up until the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in January. Do nothing to discourage this basic trend. Modifications to this strategy would be in order after the CES.
2. Initiate various actions to divert attention from Atari's real goals, e.g., the Amiga/Commodore chip lawsuit and talks with other computer manufacturers (Mindset). While this is going on, keep the pressure on internally to develop the new line of computers and other supporting equipment. The practical effect of this strategy was that the market analysts/press interpreted these "smoke screens" as an indication that the new products in the development pipeline were experiencing delays or technical difficulties. In my opinion, even the competition was lulled into a false sense of security.

Expressing this line of reasoning in a more technical jargon, the press/market analysts were captive to the widespread "pre-emptive marketing" strategies of so many

firms (vaporware). This created a natural cynicism towards pronouncements by Atari. Atari basically used this situation to its advantage. As a result, when the January CES deadline for the introduction of the new computers was an accomplished fact, publicity was not only favorable, but there was lots of it and free.

What of the Future?

While the press and market analysts admit the new machines, 16-bit STs, are certain to intensify the competition (code words for they liked them), they have certain broad reservations. Basically, they boil down to:

1. How fast will software firms jump on the Atari bandwagon?
2. Will Atari have enough cash to finance the production of the new machine until it is profitable? Sound familiar?

From my observations and interactions with the software firms, they are fairly eager. Furthermore, as I understand it, Atari will introduce, simultaneously with the new STs, an array of sophisticated software. By next Christmas, there should be a bundle of third-party software available. Next Christmas you say, yes - Christmas - 5 months after the new machine is on the shelves.

As for the cash shortage, it is a lot of bunk. Now that the new machines are out, can you imagine a venture capitalist with money to invest saying the following: "Gee Wiz, you have this great machine, a great marketing plan, and a demand for the product. In addition, there is Jack Tramiel. But....no, I won't invest in Atari. I will invest in this firm which has no product but some good ideas." This latter situation is why a lot of the venture capitalists have left the electronics market - again vaporware, e.g. Gavilan Computer, Microsoft's delayed "windows", and Coleco's poorly conceived product are all symptomatic of the problems in attracting investment capital. In comparison, Atari is an excellent opportunity and the money market knows it (they don't read computer codes but understand risk/benefit analysis).

There will be problems ahead for Atari - not the glossed-over repetitive analysis reported in the press to date. Next month, I will look at some of the potential problems and offer, hopefully, constructive suggestions.

I must emphasize that this assessment is mine and has been formulated over the past two months or so. I can only say that capitalism is alive and well. Mr. Tramiel, a true proponent - Congratulations!

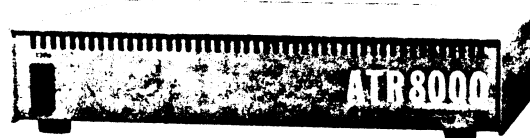
An Award

As stated earlier, a fair amount of misinformed, silly, non-sensical articles appeared in the print media concerning Atari. However, the most ludicrous of them all was an interview that Analog had with Jack Tramiel in the January issue (which appeared on the newsstands in early

December). The interview was bannered on the front cover - proud indeed? However, the content of the interview related absolutely nothing other than Jack Tramiel was alive and he was having a good time at someone's expense - lot's of laughter. If you ask me, it was a variation on the old tactic of bait and switch. Guess who fell hook, line and sinker - not Atari! I was upset by that article but what followed I was not prepared for. The following month (February issue), Analog must have had some second thoughts on having published the interview because they came out with a rather odd editorial. More or less, the explanation was that "many of the questions prepared for the interview were answered at the (press) conference. Thus, Lee and I didn't harass Jack Tramiel for that information during our interview". Upon reading their write-up of the press conference several times and analyzing the information supplied therein (this did not take a great deal of time), I have come to the gracious conclusion that the Analog reporters either inadvertently forgot to bring their list of questions to the interview or lost their notes the night before at the party. If I was not gracious, I would think that maybe the interviewers were scared out of their wits to interview Tramiel. But, I know this is not correct - my friends have told me so.

In sum, I am very happy with the new 8 and 16 bit computers - given my present knowledge. It is an excellent start and I would love to get my hands on a 512K version. But I will leave as I started, with a quote. "Call no man happy till he dies".

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BATTLE BYTES

M. Evan Brooks

After Pearl

I would like to preface this review by apologizing for the lack of a column last month. My Atari unfortunately caught the infamous "Defender" syndrome, whereby the spacebar becomes inoperative. Believe me, one never notices how essential a space bar is until it comes time to writing an article. But my computer is back to normal, so let the review begin . . .

AFTER PEARL (by SuperWare) is a true "beer and pretzels" wargame. Its historicity is subject to severe question, but its playability is of the utmost simplicity. At a price of \$20, I would heartily recommend this game for a beginner; however, make sure that the purchaser is aware of the fact that this replay of World War II in the Pacific bears little resemblance to the actual event. The game is very similar to Avalon Hill's VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC (a board game-type simulation), although the latter does offer more latitude.

Points are received by virtue of occupation of major islands and territories. Each such land mass is noted by the point-worthiness and the number of turns it takes an enemy force to seize control of such a prize by siege. Movement is inputted by joystick control, and each ship task force (depending on the number of ships in the same area) may be moved separately.

The basic concept of this "simulation" is dependent upon the aircraft carrier. Only carriers may project their influence throughout the geographic areas. Surface ships (battleships, cruisers, and destroyers) are useful only for siege operations and potential surface battles, as well as protection of the fragile carriers. Each land target has its own land-based airpower; until such airpower is reduced to zero by carrier airpower, surface ships are extremely vulnerable.

The simulation begins after the attack at Pearl Harbor. Based upon a randomizer, damage at Pearl Harbor can vary between minimal and total. However, since only surface vessels were stationed at Pearl, no critical damage is done. Remember, the name of the game is AIR POWER. By joystick inputs, you may move your task forces as you deem fit. Nevertheless, your options are limited, in that combat is a function of proximity to enemy bases/task forces and determined solely by the computer. Also, reinforcements are fixed and not variable.

It is now January 1942 (or thereabouts . . . it is difficult to tell the date since the simulation goes on for forty turns, each of which would seem to be approximately one month). The main Japanese task forces are approaching Midway; can you stop them? The answer is NO, nor should you attempt to do so. By fighting for Midway, the net result will be minor damage to the Japanese task forces with a crippling blow to the American carrier forces. The best response is to abandon Midway to its own devices, and form a major task force near Pearl. The southern carrier

forces (each consisting of a single carrier) should be sent to Guadalcanal, where they will most often sink the Japanese carrier (the KAGA) and hopefully survive with minimal damage. While this is occurring, Kwajalein will be left bare of enemy planes, and is an available target. BUT BEWARE: the computer is an unforgiving opponent. While easy to defeat, it requires patience. An early American blitzkrieg tends to bring the main Japanese task forces down into the south-central Pacific. AND they are unbeatable given American resources at this time.

So bide your time. After Midway falls, the main Japanese effort will be directed against Alaska. The Japanese will split the main task forces into efforts against Attu and Dutch Harbor. Given any sort of luck, the land-based air in those bases will account for at least one major Japanese carrier (on one occasion, the land-based aircraft at Dutch Harbor destroyed the main Imperial Japanese Battle Fleet). In the south, major attacks will be made against Port Moresby. Again, let it fend for itself; while the base will probably fall, it will take some Japanese vessels with it; thereafter, the southern fleet will attack Australia. Given the larger number of land-based aircraft, these will destroy the southern Japanese fleet.

Meanwhile, the major American fleet is building up around Pearl Harbor. Take Midway, Wake, Kwajalein, and wait for the main Japanese fleet to return to the Central Pacific. When it does, engage it with battleships in the task force van, but with carriers sufficiently close by to project their airpower against the Japanese Battle Fleet. This major battle should be the twilight of Japanese expansion.

From this point, your race is against time. Taking the Home Islands is a challenge; Japan has enough land-based air power to guarantee the loss of at least 2-4 American carriers. These carriers should be engaging before turn 22. Since it takes ten turns of occupancy to seize Japan, preplanning becomes of vital importance. Reinforcements enter in Japan; however, you can avoid such Japanese reinforcements by stacking eight American vessels in the Home Islands. Since this is the maximum task force occupancy, it will close out all Japanese reinforcements.

While this is occurring, assaults (carrier-based, of course) must be made in the Central Pacific. Be aware that Saipan, Guam and Okinawa have a nasty habit of destroying American carriers that were engaged in reducing other bases. These losses cannot be avoided, but they must be minimized.

The final assault is against Saigon, Indonesia and Singapore. Preferably 3 carriers in 2 separate task forces will be required. Remember, for these bases to fall, they have to be occupied for five turns; therefore, all of this has to occur before turn 35.

It is possible to seize every base on the display. To win an overwhelming victory, you have to outscore the computer by 100 points. This writer has routinely outscored the computer by 1,000 points, so victory is definitely achievable.

Overall, I enjoyed this game. Serious wargamers and historians detest it with passion (historically, of course, both Midway and Port Moresby never fell; the computer's habit of attacking the Alaskan bases while ignoring the more lucrative Central and Southern Pacific is inexplicable). But remember, this is a beginner's game. Little input is needed, and there are sufficient levels of play (from sailor to captain) and scenarios (this is based on the WWII scenario; other scenarios cover Midway and Leyte) to keep most people interested.

I will confess that I often pull this out. Unlike certain games that take over 24 hours to play, a complete WWII scenario lasts about 45 minutes. It is nice to be able to just play a complete scenario in one sitting. Man does not live by champagne alone; AFTER PEARL is a playable "beer and pretzels" game. With the option of two players (which is available), I feel it might be more fun since the Japanese player would not be so restricted by the Idiocy Doctrine.

In conclusion, a playable game for the beginner, or a relaxing interlude for the aficionado. PLEASE do not expect to discover insight into WWII naval doctrine here; just relax and enjoy the ride. Next month: BATTLE FOR NORMANDY. Also, if anyone has any tactical/strategic hints for any computer wargames, please send them in for publication herein.

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TIPS 'N TRAPS

Barry Burke and Jim Stevenson

Hello, again fellow adventurers. As promised, the adventurers THE DARK CRYSTAL and the very complicated MASK OF THE SUN would be in this column ... which they are. Once again, we ask for your kind support, and lo and behold, someone has promised hints on an adventure that I know adventurers new and old have had troubles with. DALLAS QUEST will be the highlight for next month. In the meantime, keep the letters and calls coming, and be sure to try to leave something on the adventure network BBS mentioned in earlier articles. And now, DARK CRYSTAL and MASK OF THE SUN.

THE DARK CRYSTAL

Q. How do I get past the bars at the mouth of the ravine?

A. Use the friend that most looks like the face to find the key to victory.

Q. Where do I find the answer to urSu's riddle?

A. Can't you cut it? Is the moss in the way? Or have you been staring into spirals?

Q. Where is Aughra? Signed, a very confused Gelfling.

A. Somewhere in the forest, there is a tree that is Aughra's servant. Talk to its friend and it will let you pass.

Q. What does the babbling brook mean?

A. You must be lonely, why don't you talk to someone about your problems. (By the way, Here's the friend.)

MASK OF THE SUN

Q. What do I do in the two talking statues scene?

A. A stone jaguar knows the word of truth.

Q. How do I get by the snake?

A. Simple. Illumination means elimination.

Q. Which direction do I go to get out of the gas?

A. Somehow you will find an exit to freedom.

Q. How do I get past the hellish place without being killed every time I press a key?

A. Good luck on this one--there's no known pattern to follow in this scene--just press the button as soon as the disappearing stone reappears.

Q. How do I get out of the first pyramid?

A. To urn your freedom, what is left must be made right. Do you remember KUNG FU?

ARMUDIC BBS... (703) 425-6698
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GAMEVIEWS

Roland Gabeler

We are all aware of the scarcity of software for Atari computers as we move into this new year. While several new programs have recently been introduced, basically the C64 software continues to proliferate while Atari has been declining. Computer stores that currently (or formerly) handle Atari, have reduced the prices on many software titles in an attempt to salvage their investment. While they recoup their capital to reinvest in C64 programs, we have the opportunity to pick up some very nice games for less than they cost the software firms to package and ship them! I plan to review some of this "bargain" software as it becomes available or falls to the bargain level of pricing.

Let me suggest a system for obtaining an entertainment value to a software package. Assume a hypothetical recreation value of \$5.00 per hour for your enjoyment. While I'm certain many people value their spare time at a higher value, this is "hypothetical" and will serve as a good average for a family with various interests. So, let's assume we paid \$15.00 for a game, we require three entertainment hours to be repaid for our investment. This time may be accumulated by one person or all members of a family, so long as the total time is related to the total investment. As you can see, this method makes it easy to determine that a game on sale for \$5.00 will yield a family enough value to repay you, IF, that game has something unique in play, that makes it worth your time. I'm sure we all have software that has paid for itself many times over, and a few that will never pay back the investment. This is especially true of some games that commanded a \$39.95 pricetag.

In this column, I will review new entertainment as well as the newly reduced games that appear to hold some interest. I strongly suggest you purchase games from your local Atari retailer when possible. These dealers take a chance by stocking our products, so we must support them or lose the ability to buy locally. Toys-R-Us has begun selling much software at list, not discount, price. Most local Dealers will allow you a discount if you present your proof of membership in a local Atari club. However, \$5.00 programs should be purchased wherever they appear, as they sometimes disappear soon after they are reduced. For this reason, I will mention where I saw a game for a low price but, I can't assure you of availability.

My reviews will contain an overview of play mechanics, screens and basic strategy. I will then give a summary and assess a value. My value will be the compiled value of my family and friends. After you have played some of the games reviewed, you will be able to scale your opinions with my reviews and determine if the game is worth your investment.

Now that you understand the method I use to evaluate the games, let's begin with a recent purchase, Access Software's BEACH HEAD. In this game you are commanding an assault force with a mission to capture an enemy fortress. This game is an action/arcade/strategy game with heavy

emphasis on the first two and a little of the latter. This is a multiloop disk game that loads each scenario as you progress.

The first screen is a "reconnaissance" view (map) of the area. You move your fleet to either the black marked beach, or around the island to face the enemy. The black beach landing is preferred, as this will allow you to play a relatively easy screen and gain many points. The direct route around the island allows the enemy to see you coming and sets a slaughter in progress as they are well prepared when you arrive.

After landing at the black beach, a new screen is loaded and you are looking at a large cove (lake) speckled with white dots. These dots are mines, but they are not densely packing the lake. Your object is to lead your ships, one at a time across the cove without either hitting a mine or being struck by one of several torpedoes that cross the cove at random. This screen is not difficult, once you get the timing of dodging the obstacles down pat.

The third screen is a repeat of the map, across which you move your group of ships (en masse) to meet the enemy's fleet. This meeting loads the fourth screen where the action picks up in pace. This screen shows your anti-aircraft gun at the bottom, ships in the lower center, a center horizon, and aircraft growing in perspective as they move towards you from the horizon. Your object is to shoot down the approaching aircraft, thereby avoiding their hits on your ship (about 18 hits sink one ship). You have several ships if you were careful crossing the cove. You will most likely lose a couple to the aircraft before the attack stops. There is also an occasional slow flying observer aircraft flying across the screen. You gain extra points by it's elimination. This screen is not very difficult, but poses some target practice firing errors as the enemy planes back sharply as they approach.

The fifth screen to load is almost identical to the previous, with the exception of aircraft (none). This screen is more difficult as your gun is now a piece of deck artillery and your object is to sink the enemy ships before they sink your fleet. An aircraft carrier will get you a lot of points if you can sink it before it leaves the scene. In the mean time, the other ships are firing on you. They take turns of five rounds with you being hit on the fifth shot (one shot sinks a ship). So you have four shots to sink the ship firing on you before his fifth shot hits you. This is accomplished by shooting a shell towards a ship, noting, in a display at the bottom of your screen, how many meters short or long your shot was and compensating on the next shell.

After you have sunk all enemy ships, your Atari loads the sixth screen. This screen shows your ships have off-loaded tanks onto the enemy beach. The object is to get as many tanks from right to left on a scrolling screen through mines, obstacles, bunkers, enemy gun emplacements and tanks (difficulty here is substantially increased).

When this is accomplished, the final screen loads to show a large enemy hill with a huge gun at the top. The

gun is not in a position to fire but begins to remedy that as soon as you have control. Your gun, at the bottom again, has a limited amount of time to knock out white hatches appearing on the hillside. If you can knock them out before the big gun lines you up in his sights, you win the game. But, if the gun gets off one shot, you tank is gone and you begin another assault; the big gun never misses!

This game is not currently heavily discounted, and cost me \$26.95. Because of the multi-scenarios, it keeps your interest very well. The difficulty is not oppressive, therefore it remains fun to play. I am sure we will play this one many more times before we tire of it. I can recommend it as a very good buy.

Word Builder,

by Joe Waters, NPX-002, \$8.00

Reviewed by Bonnie Anderson

Through my job with Fairfax County Schools and my graduate classes at George Mason University, I have viewed and evaluated a lot of educational software. Some of it has been great, some ... not so great, some ... even terrible!

Joe Waters' WORD BUILDER compares quite favorably with the really good commercial educational software currently available. And when you consider the price of only \$8.00, WORD BUILDER becomes a necessary addition to any software collection used by any age student!

The WORD BUILDER disk, with written documentation, consists of two Atari BASIC programs, WORD and UPDATE, and nine individual dictionaries, each with up to 100 words and their corresponding definitions. The WORD program is used primarily to increase vocabulary but, as stated in the documentation, "it can be used to increase speed-reading ability as well." The UPDATE program allows you to change any of the dictionaries supplied with WORD BUILDER as well as create entirely new dictionaries.

WORD BUILDER has two game options:

Game 1 -- You are presented with one definition and five different words, one of which will match the given definition.

Game 2 -- You are presented with one word and five different definitions, one of which will match the given word.

Motivation is provided by a timer at the bottom of the screen which is active only during answer selection. The score summary display screen shows where your score falls on a six-level ladder from Beginner to Expert. Highest score is continually updated.

Immediate feedback is provided during play. When a right answer is chosen, the score is immediately incremented by 100 for first try, 50 for second try, 25 for third try, and only 15 points for the fourth try. If

a wrong answer is chosen, "SORRY!" appears, and that choice is eliminated from the list of possible answers. If the correct answer is never chosen, the word and its definition appear prominently in the center of the screen. WORD BUILDER provides appropriate positive and negative reinforcement!

The user is always in control of the game. At any time during play, SELECT will return the program to the selection menu, and START will restart the current game. The UPDATE program provides teacher (or parent) control. Words, definitions, and dictionary names can be changed with ease. The time limits can be changed (60-240 seconds) to accommodate different ability levels. Newly created dictionaries can be sorted alphabetically and printed out using single keystroke commands. Letter color, and screen color and brightness can be changed at any time, and the sound can be turned off or on -- all with single-key commands.

The title screen, although quite captivating, can be skipped, as can the very concise and complete game instructions within the program. Instructions can be called up at any time using the Help option (also a single-key command).

The game can be played with either a joystick or the keyboard. I found the keyboard to be much faster than the joystick. However, a younger, more arcade-agile player may prefer the joystick!

WORD BUILDER's versatility is its strongest feature. The ability to create your own dictionaries gives limitless possibilities for subject matter ... social studies, spelling, science, math vocabulary; presidents and their home states or dates in office; states/capitals; inventors/inventions; or as Joe suggested, Redskins and their jersey numbers! Dictionary #1, provided on the disk, is SONG TRIVIA. Do you remember these songs and who recorded them -- "Venus," "Tom Dooley," "Tiptoe Through the Tulips," and "The Purple People Eater?" (You'll have to get the disk to find out the answers!)

Educational Programs for the ATARI

Reviews by Art Corte

SUCCESS WITH MATH-QUADRATIC EQUATIONS, CBS SOFTWARE \$14.95. This program provides drill and practice in solving factorable quadratic equations. While the documentation is minimal, there are several screens of instructions available if desired at the beginning of the program. The program has two levels of difficulty, the harder ones requiring more steps and more thought to solve.

After choosing the level of difficulty and the number of problems desired, the program generates and displays a quadratic equation and a list of possible next steps in the solution. The student must first choose the right step. If he chooses wrong, the program will correct him

and indicate the correct step. The student must next carry out the next step, for example divide both sides by a number, the computer doing the arithmetic and displaying the reduced equation. It then displays a list of the next possible steps and the process repeats.

As an example, for $2X^2+6X+8=0$, the first step would be to choose dividing both sides by a number. The program asks what number to divide by. The student entering the number 2, and the displayed equation changes to X^2+3X+4 . After choosing factoring the left side as the proper step, the program allows the student to enter $x+2$ and $x+4$ as factors; this is followed by the appropriate steps to solve the individual factors for X . If the student fails to solve the equation after two tries, the program steps through the procedure for the student and solves it for him.

This reviewer had not solved quadratic equations for 30 years and found the program useful in prompting him to remember the appropriate steps in solving the equations. The need to choose the right procedure from a list of options helped fix the solution sequence firmly in mind. The program does what it sets out to do in an effective manner. My only comment is that the program covers only a narrow segment of a math course and that such programs might be better marketed in a package that covered an entire math course in the order that it is normally taught.

CRYPTO CUBE - by Designware. CRYPTO CUBE is one of the more fun games that I have sampled and I have no reservations about recommending it to people who like word games. It can be played alone or by two persons, I found the competition engendered by the latter more enjoyable. It is advertised as being for ages 8 to adult and should provide both spelling practice for kids and intellectual exercise for adults.

The program draws a cube, on four faces of which are a grid of squares in which are inscribed a number of words in crossword puzzle style. At the start, the squares are all blank, one moves the cursor to a chosen square and presses the space bar whereupon the square shows itself to be a blank, a vowel, or a question mark if it contains a consonant. One then guesses the letter. If you guess right, you gain points; if wrong, you lose. The objective is to guess all the words on the cube face, after which the program rotates the cube to present a new face until all four are solved. Some 50 lists of words and puzzle arrangements are on the disk. You can also make your own word lists and puzzles although it takes some time for the computer to work the words into a puzzle. The word sets are grouped around themes such as pets, composers, musical instruments, sports, etc. to enable you to guess what the words might be, although you can look at the word list if you desire (it's more fun if you do not).

The game has some flaws. One moves the cursor using the cursor keys; a joystick would be better. There are some features that one rapidly tires of that slow the game up, it could be improved by making them optional. Aside from this it is a fun game which had me and members of my family thinking hard to beat each other at divining words.

F. G. NEWTON by Krell Software \$49.95. F.G. NEWTON is designed to test one's powers of observation and ability to analyse and deduce rules from a series of patterns. It can be very challenging and may suit people who enjoy N.Y. Times crossword puzzles and the like.

The game presents a series of grids of varying size ranging from 3 x 3 to 9 x 9. The individual cells in the grid are either filled or empty (white or black) according to one of thirty logical rules (for example, vertical symmetry, all corners filled, etc.) set out in the instructions. The object of the game is to deduce the rule that the computer is following in generating the grid pattern in the fewest number of moves. After viewing a few patterns that the computer has generated, the player may test a hypothesis by generating a grid himself and asking the computer if it conforms to the rule. The player can guess the rule and if he gives up (as I did on numerous tries) the computer will tell you the rule. There are 5 levels of difficulty (I never got beyond the easiest) and it can be played with two persons, one generating the patterns and the other trying to deduce the rule.

If you like having your analytical ability challenged, it is an excellent game. My only criticism was that players should have the option of dispensing with a review of the rules on the screen prior to guessing the rule as I found the list of rules in the instructions easier to work from. Krell makes a great many intellectually challenging games. It is unfortunate that very few of them are available for the Atari.

MATH MAZE by Designware. MATH MAZE is designed for children 6 to 11 to practice basic math skills (+, -, x, /) for numbers 1 through 9. The program presents a math problem and the player must indicate the answer by maneuvering the cursor (in the form of a fly) through a maze (using either joystick or keyboard) to the digits making up the answer. There are several levels of difficulty; the walls can be invisible and there can be a spider roaming the maze which will eat the cursor fly forcing the player to start again from the starting point. The player gains points for a correct answer, the number of points decreasing with the length of time taken to answer, and loses points if caught by the fly. One can make up one's own mazes to supplement those on the disk.

The reviewer's children no longer being in the appropriate age bracket for the program, a good user's test was not possible but a pair of competitive kids would probably sharpen up their math skills as they strived to build up the highest score.

SPELLICOPTER - by Designware. SPELLICOPTER is a spelling practice game that exercises one's manual dexterity, vocabulary, and spelling ability. It is played using a joystick or the keyboard to maneuver a helicopter from a landing field over mountains and through obstacles to a field where a sentence with one missing word is displayed, the letters of that word also displayed in scrambled order. The object is to maneuver the helicopter over the letters in the proper order, pick them up by pressing the fire button, and return to base. A limited

fuel supply, indicated by a gauge, forces the player to hurry lest he crash. There are three levels of difficulty, with objects to crash into and UFOs to dodge. The program disk contains word lists with 400 words and their contexts, ranging from very easy to quite hard. One can also make up one's own word list and sentence contexts on a separate disk without limit.

I found the game challenging and fun although I was rarely able to spell the words at the highest level of difficulty without running out of fuel, having to start out again from base, and loosing points in the process. On a few occasions I made it back in time and got bonus points for having fuel remaining but it required full concentration to do so. I suspect that children accustomed to using a joystick would have an easier time.

TRAP-A ZOID by Designware. This game, designed for ages 7 and up, reinforces knowledge of geometric shapes by having the player draw the shapes to trap an alien figure called a zoid. The zoid enters from the left edge of the screen and seeks to traverse to the right. The player using a joystick (or the cursor keys) moves the cursor around the screen using the fire button to designate the corners of a polygon that trap the zoid inside. The objective is to trap the zoid in the smallest polygon of the type requested by the program; the types of polygon varying from triangles to octagons depending on the skill level chosen. If you succeed in trapping the zoid you win points, if the zoid gets through, you lose points. One can gain extra points by answering bonus multiple choice questions that arise in the course of the game.

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**Newer is not Always Better:
Letter Wizard vs Text Wizard**

John Barnes

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Most of us expect a software package that replaces an earlier product to be better. For mysterious reasons, known only to themselves, software vendors sometimes ignore this principle. I offer my recent experience in upgrading to the LETTER WIZARD word processing package from TEXT WIZARD as an example.

Flies in the Ointment. To begin with, my Epson MX-80 printer no longer prints bidirectionally. The time to print a plain vanilla document is nearly doubled. The commands to select type fonts do not work with my printer. I will have to continue using the old word processor without vendor support until I can spend another bunch of money to upgrade my printer to Grafrax+.

Any of my previous text files that I wish to use with the new word processor have to be converted to a new format because Datasoft decided to change the tokens that are used to mark text formatting commands. Fortunately they provided conversion software that is supposed to handle almost all of the problems. The string search and replace commands no longer allow me to begin a phrase with a blank. This is a serious loss because it limits my ability to set up truly unique search strings. I used to

search for blanks to move the cursor along a word at a time, and I can no longer do this.

I am sorely disappointed because I can no longer write my formatted text files out to disc. This is a very grave defect because I must often send documents to other computers rather than to the printer. The ability to write files to disc motivated my initial purpose of TEXT WIZARD. Users who want to send material to letter quality printers through the RS-232 ports will also miss this outstanding feature of the early TEXT WIZARD.

I have also lost almost two (document) pages (8008 bytes to be exact) of text buffer space and I am not sure what I got in return. Five lines of the screen have been sacrificed to a status window that is rarely used.

The introduction of menus has led to a new bug, in which the text insert switch is turned off when returning to the editor from the main menu.

I am annoyed by the need to relearn many of the editing keys because their definitions have been changed. SHIFT-del no longer deletes a line, as it does on most other ATARI screen editors. OPTION I is now the toggle for the insert text mode rather than SHIFT-ins. I now have to use the Atari key to input text formatting commands, thus replacing a single keystroke with three. The old version made intelligent use of the START key in addition to the OPTION and SELECT keys for block, search, and replace operations. The new version does not, with the result that these functions are now more obscure. The new functions are different enough so that back and forth transitions between the two programs are difficult.

Missed Opportunities. The new product does not fix all of the flaws in the old one. The block buffer is still skimpy and the end of a block for duplication or moving is not marked at all. Control characters, such as carriage returns, still cannot be included in search or replace strings, and searching and replacing still require two keystrokes for each string occurrence. Tabs are still lost by immediate expansion into spaces, thus leading to problems in formatting tables.

There is no format preview function like the one in ATARIWRITER. The size of the text buffer is still limited to that of available memory. There is still no macro capability and no cursor movement or text deletion by word as well as character. The package still powers up in replace mode rather than insert mode.

I cannot customize the vendor's bootable disc to use my RAMDISK, which would facilitate cutting and pasting, checking spelling, and using compilers such as DEEP BLUE C, PASCAL, or ACTION.

The Positive Side. In all fairness I should note that TEXT WIZARD has been my standard word processing program for nearly three years now, and LETTER WIZARD will do nicely for many people just starting out. They are both good programs, perhaps the best available that operate totally within the framework of ATARI DOS.

The new program shows some positive improvements. The cursor can be moved to the beginning or end of a line. Movements to the top or bottom of a page do not place the cursor in the middle of a word. Escape sequences for printer control can now be embedded in the text. Moving the editing functions off of the CTRL keys leads to better separation of the formatting and the text I/O functions. The menu functions and the interaction with DOS are much nicer. The status displays are much cleaner. The extraneous blanks embedded in the word wrap seem to be gone. There is more flexibility in the direct printer support. The package includes a spelling checker that works in a standalone mode. There is also an interface to Filemanager+ databases. The save, load, and block delete functions are more foolproof. The manual is better organized and better written. Error trapping has been improved, with meaningful messages replacing changing screen colors or mysterious silences. The user now has better control of screen color and text contrast.

The package is also much cheaper than it was in 1981 dollars so that it does represent good value. In time I will probably get used to LETTER WIZARD, but I have to keep TEXT WIZARD around for those cases where I need formatted output on disc or when I want to use special type styles. I will still have to use other editing software when I want to do program development work or simpler kinds of editing on data for application programs. In order to get my dream all-purpose word processor I would have to go out and buy a VAX with a suitable terminal and the right software, but I am not rich enough for that.

AtariWriter Printer Drivers

If you have AtariWriter but do not have an Atari printer, you need to have a printer driver for your particular printer to make full use of the commands available in AtariWriter. Since APX was closed, many people have had trouble finding the AtariWriter Printer Driver Diskette. As a result, the author of those Printer Drivers, Gary W. Furr, has begun to sell Printer Drivers directly. Currently Gary has Printer Drivers for the following dot matrix and letter quality (LQ) printers:

ATARI 1020 and 1027 (LQ)
 EPSON MX-80/100 (all 3 versions)
 EPSON RX-80/100, EPSON FX-80/100
 GEMINI 10 and 10X
 IDS - 480 Microprism
 MANNESMANN TALLY 160/180L, SPIRIT-80
 NEC - 8023A
 OKIDATA 92/93A
 C. ITOH PROWRITER 8510
 SILVER REED 770 (LQ)
 BMC PB 401 (LQ)

Send a cashier check or money order in the amount of \$10.00 to Gary W. Furr, P.O. Box 1073, Mountain View, CA 94042. Gary will send you the printer driver that you specify and the documentation in the return mail. Be sure to specify which printer you own when you write.

SynChron, By Synapse, Disk, \$39.95 Reviewed by Alan Hart

SYNCHRON is a program for personal appointment management. It was written by Harry Guiremand. SYNCHRON requires an Atari computer with at least 48K of memory, and a disk drive. Printer and joystick are optional.

The SYNCHRON program is basically a specialized data base management program. It allows you to keep track of personal appointments, birthdays, anniversaries, and other special events, for a two year period. You may store up to 100 lines of information for each day (you will run out of disk space if you actually try to store that much for every day of the entire two years).

When you boot the SYNCHRON disk, the first thing it does is asks you to replace the program disk with a data disk. It checks to see that the data disk has been initialized for use by SYNCHRON. If it hasn't, it asks if you want the disk initialized.

Once you have a data disk in your disk drive, SYNCHRON displays the main menu, which is shown below:

```

SYNCHRON

MAIN MENU

-> CALENDER
    KEYWORD MENU
    PASSWORD MENU
    PRINT MENU
    REPLACE YEAR
    CHANGE DISK

(C) 1983 SYNAPSE
  
```

To select an option on the menu, you use the arrow keys to move the pointer to the desired option, then press RETURN. Optionally, you may use a joystick to move the pointer, and the fire button to select the option. Each main menu option is further described below.

CALENDER. The Calender option is the main option of the program. It allows you to make daily entries into your two year appointment data base.

You are first presented with a menu which looks just like a one year calender, except that there are small green or white boxes where the days of the month normally are shown. Green boxes indicate that you have made no entries for that day. White boxes indicate that you have made entries for that day.

Well, as I am sure you have figured out for yourself, just having a picture of a calender on the screen doesn't do too much for you. The calender is actually a selection menu. Using the arrow keys (or joystick), you can select

a specific month, select the calender for the other year, select the main menu, or do a keyword search.

If you want to make a daily entry, you first select a specific month. SYNCHRON then displays a one month calender in exactly the format you would expect for a one month calender. The days of the month that already contain entries are highlighted. You may then select a specific day of the month with the arrow keys (or joystick). SYNCHRON will then display the day of the month at the top of the screen, and a blank screen for you too enter up to 100 lines of information you want for that day.

Once you have reached the data entry page for a specific day, SYNCHRON functions as a simple word processor. You may move the cursor around anywhere within the 100 line page using the CTRL key and arrow keys, and then type in any information that you want.

There are a number of special keystrokes that SYNCHRON allows when you make daily entries:

CTRL-A: Turns automatic word wrap off. Normally, SYNCHRON automatically senses the end of a line and moves the last word on the line to the next line if it won't fit.

CTRL-L: Allows you to set the left margin from 0 to 9. The margin is only used when you type data in. If you change a margin after you have typed something, the new margins have no effect on what you have already typed.

CTRL-R: Allows you to set the right margin 0 to 9 spaces from the right of the screen.

CTRL-U: Scrolls the text up 13 lines.

CTRL-D: Scrolls the text down 13 lines.

CTRL-T: Jumps to the top of the text.

CTRL-E: Jumps to the end of the text.

CTRL-B: Creates a bullet character on the screen. Also when printing, all bulleted lines are aligned on the page.

CTRL-K: Marks a word as a keyword. The next six characters after the CTRL-K are save as a keyword, and can be searched for later.

CTRL-I: Enter or exit insert mode. Allows characters to be inserted in a line (however, any characters pushed beyond the end of the line are lost).

CTRL-H: Displays a heart symbol.

CTRL-M: Displays a male symbol.

CTRL-F: Displays a female symbol.

START: Saves what you have typed on the disk, and returns you to the calender for the month.

OPTION: Ignores any changes you have typed and returns to the calender for the month.

When you are using the calender option, and you have the entire year calender, or the calender for a specific month, you may do a search for a specific keyword. To do the search, you select the search option which is displayed at the bottom of the screen by moving the cursor

there with the arrow keys (or joystick). Then you type the keyword you want to search for. SYNCHRON will then display the calender again, except that it will highlight only the days that contain entries with that keyword.

KEYWORD MENU. The keyword option allows you to look at a list of all the words you have marked as keywords when you made daily entries. It also allows you to sort the keywords alphabetically.

PASSWORD MENU. The password option allows you to add or change the password on your data disk. If you add a password, you will be prompted to enter the password whenever you try to load the data disk. If you don't know the password, you won't be able to use the disk. The password option, also allows you to remove a password from your disk.

PRINT MENU. The print option allows you to print out selected portions of your appointment data base. When you want to print, you are allowed to specify a starting and ending date, and an optional keyword. SYNCHRON will then print all the entries between the two dates to your printer. If you specify a keyword, it will only print those days that contain that keyword.

The print option also allows you to specify some print formatting options. You may specify the number of characters per line to print, a number of characters to indent the left margin, and you may enter printer control characters to be printed before and after the headers for each daily entry printed.

REPLACE YEAR. When you reach the end of a year, and you want to start another year, the replace year option, deletes all the information for the year you just passed, and initializes a new year for new entries.

CHANGE DISK. The change disk option allows you to stop using one data disk, and to start using another.

CONCLUSIONS. The SYNCHRON program is a well written program, but I feel that it has several drawbacks. For one thing, most of the funtions it provides can be accomplished with a data base manager (SynFile+ for example). In addition, I believe the program would have been more useful, if a few additional options had been implemented. Many people have appointments that occur the same day each month, or the same day each week. SYNCHRON requires you to enter each occurrence individually. That is 52 entries for a weekly meeting, that probably could have been done with one command. Another drawback is that at the end of the year, the entire year is deleted and you must re-enter the next year from scratch. If you are using the program for birthdays and anniversaries, as the SYNCHRON documentation suggests, you must re-enter all the birthdays and anniversaries again for each year, even though they don't change from year to year (at least they didn't the last time I checked). Unless you want a program that can display nice displays of calenders on your TV (or monitor) screen, I don't recommend that you get a copy of SYNCHRON.

BUY REAL TELECOMPUTING POWER with the new ATARI 1030 MODEM/SOFTWARE PACKAGE

With this new ATARI MODEM/SOFTWARE PACKAGE, you get powerful telecommunications capabilities. Whether you're a new owner or an experienced programmer - this product is for you! It connects directly to the phone line and to the computer via a peripheral cable (included): no expansion module needed!

The 1030 Modem features built-in software to enable you to telecommunicate without having a disk drive! However, if you do have a drive, the new software on the disk provided will enable you to upload and download files and programs.

The disk has the following programs on it:

AMODEM features the XMODEM protocol for file and program transfers to/from BBS's.

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Retail price

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Your cost

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Benchmark Tests

by Bob Danson

In the January 1985 *COMPUTE!* magazine article "MSX is Coming, Part 2: Inside MSX" by Tom Halfhill a short benchmark program is shown. Tom ran this program on fourteen different micro-computers. The test results ranged from 5:45 on an IBM PC to 12:58 on a TI-99/4A (the times are in minutes:seconds). The ATARI 800 was thirteenth at 9:00 minutes. From this test it might be concluded that the ATARI 800 is one of the slowest micro-computers in existence and that the only way to run a program is to start it going before going to bed so that the results will be ready in the morning! While Tom's results are perfectly valid they are representative only of a particular program and the specific conditions under which it was run. A number of steps can be taken that will very significantly increase the apparent speed of the ATARI 800.

If aesthetic and functional considerations don't prevent the screen display from being turned off during computations, almost any program's running time can be reduced by about thirty percent (see the program listing below for an example of how to do this). Turning off the screen display will reduce the benchmark program time from 9:00 to 6:08.

A hardware modification an ATARI owner can make to increase the speed of any program that performs numerical computations is to install a Newall FASTCHIP in place of the standard ATARI floating point ROM. This reduces the benchmark program time to 7:55. If the screen is turned off the benchmark time will go down to 5:24.

The next big step is to replace ATARI BASIC cartridge with the OSS BASIC. There are numerous benefits to using BASIC XL, one of which is better performance. Even with the screen display turned on the benchmark program time will go down to 4:03. If the BASIC XL "FAST" statement is used the time will go down to 3:48. And if the screen display is turned off the time will go down to 2:36.

If BASIC XL isn't fast enough we can use a BASIC compiler, such as the Monarch Data Systems ABC, "A BASIC Compiler for ATARI Computers". When the benchmark program is compiled with ABC and the resulting code executed, the time goes down to 1:33, and this is with the screen display on! If the screen is turned off the time goes down to 1:03. The ABC compiler code gets its speed by (1) translating the program from tokenized BASIC into code called "P-code" and then using a fast run-time interpreter to execute the "P-code", and (2) by using three-byte integer arithmetic (approx. +8,000,000) in place of the ATARI six-byte floating point arithmetic.

Finally, if 1:03 isn't fast enough or integer arithmetic isn't adequate for our program we can compile the program with the MMG BASIC Compiler. The MMG compiler translates a BASIC program into 6502 machine language. The MMG Compiler also has a compile-time option to select either two-byte integer arithmetic (approx. +32,767) or the ATARI six-byte floating point arithmetic. Running the benchmark program using both math modes will give us some

idea of the penalty imposed by using floating point (f.p.) arithmetic. When run with floating point arithmetic, the time is 1:50 with the screen on, 1:15 with the screen off. When run with integer arithmetic the execution time is 0:30 with the screen on, 0:20 with the screen off. From these tests we might conclude that MMG's two-byte integer arithmetic is about 3.6 times faster than floating point arithmetic.

Perhaps this is a good time to summarize the results:

	screen display	
	on	off
ATARI 800		
ATARI BASIC.....	9:00	6:08
FASTCHIP installed.....	7:55	5:24
BASIC XL.....	4:03	2:45
" with "FAST" statement..	3:48	2:36
ABC Compiler.....	1:33	1:03
MMG Compiler with f.p. math..	1:50	1:15
" with integer math.....	0:30	0:20

Phew! Suddenly the ATARI 800 has become 17.25 times faster than an IBM PC! Well not really - remember that the PC's hardware and software can also be modified to run the benchmark test faster.

The improvements in execution time shown above are valid for this particular program and hopefully other programs similar to it. Programs with a different mix of instructions may not show the same performance improvements for each of the products that were used in this test (more on this next month).

Some other points should also be noted. If you purchase OSS BASIC XL don't throw out your ATARI BASIC cartridge! Some commercial software written in BASIC will not, for various reasons, run with BASIC XL. And don't assume that the slower speed of the ABC compiler code always makes it less desirable than the MMG compiler. ABC's "P-code" is a compact method to represent large programs. ABC can create executable programs that will not fit into memory when run interpretively with ATARI BASIC or BASIC XL. And MMG generated code requires even more storage - many programs that run interpretively are too large to fit into memory after compilation by the MMG compiler. Finally, programs written for one BASIC will not run under another. The ABC compiler uses a language syntax that is a sub-set of ATARI BASIC and the MMG compiler, both of which use a language syntax which is a sub-set of BASIC XL. Programs that don't need the increased speed of compiler generated code can take advantage of BASIC XL's richer language to make programming easier and more enjoyable.

Shown below is the modified version of the benchmark test from the January 1985 issue of *COMPUTE!*. Line 90 has "REM " removed for OSS BASIC when the FAST statement is used. Line 1020 has "REM " removed when the screen display is to be turned off. Lines 1010 and 2010 are used to compute and print the elapsed execution time so that it's not necessary to hover over the program with a stopwatch.

```

90 REM FAST
100 PRINT "Creating Array":GOSUB 1000
110 DIM A(150)
120 FOR J=1 TO 150
130 A(J)=151-J
140 NEXT J
150 PRINT "Sorting"
160 EX=0:FOR
170 FOR K=0 TO 149
180 IF A(K)>A(K+1) THEN T=A(K):A(K)=A(
K+1):A(K+1)=T:EX=1
190 NEXT K
200 IF EX<>0 THEN GOTO 160
210 GOSUB 2000
220 STOP
1000 REM >>>INIT<<<
1010 POKE 18,0:POKE 19,0:POKE 20,0
1020 REM POKE 559,0
1030 RETURN
2000 REM >>>TERMIN<<<
2010 TOTAL=INT(PEEK(18)*65536+PEEK(19)
*256+PEEK(20))/60:MIN=INT(TOTAL/60):SE
CS=TOTAL-(MIN*60):? MIN;" ";SECS
2020 POKE 559,34
2030 RETURN

```

The above tests used the following products run on an ATARI 800 with OS ROM B: ATARI BASIC, Rev. C, Newell Industries FASTCHIP, Optimized Systems Software (OSS) BASIC XL, Ver. 1.02, Monarch Data Systems A BASIC Compiler (ABC), Ver. 1.03, and MMG Micro Software BASIC Compiler, Ver. 2.0

I have found that all the above products, except the MMG Compiler, have meet my programming needs and perform with few, if any, significant problems. If you are inter-

ested in the MMG Compiler I urge you to talk to me before purchasing it.

DT-80: One More Time

by Bob Danson

My review of the DT-80 cartridge that appeared in the last issue of Current Notes incorrectly reported that the default cursor control codes generated by the joystick were the same as the ATARI control-arrow key codes. The correct default joystick cursor control codes are those shown in the DT-80 instructions:

joystick	equivalent key	hex code
up	CTRL-K, CTRL--	0B
down	CTRL-J, CTRL-=	0A
left	CTRL-H, back space	0B
right	CTRL-L, CTRL-*	0C

Remember, when all else fails, read the documentation!

While on the subject of the DT-80 joystick cursor control codes, the way to redefine them is to redefine the ATARI keyboard CTRL-arrow keys. The proper values for WordStar are as follows:

CTRL-arrow	new code
up	05
down	18
left	13
right	04

Once this is done the keyboard CTRL-arrow keys can also be used for cursor postioning. This can be advantageous for a novice WordStar user, who can use the CTRL-arrow keys instead of the CTRL-E,S,D,X keys.

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AURA

Atari Users Regional Association

A.U.R.A. Minutes: December 5

by Rochelle Follender

Demonstrations: Bill Schadt gave a detailed demo of "ARTUTIL.BAS", a graphics utility which uses files from ATARI Artist. It will be added to the club library. Chris of ACA showed items to add to your holiday wish list including "SPY VS SPY"; Blue Chip Software; AT-A-GLANCE templates for ATARIWRITER, SYNCALC etc.; 1027 ink rollers; Sentinel rainbow-color disks; CONAN; BEYOND CASTLE WOFENSTEIN. Software prices have come way down.

Discussion: Next meeting is January 2, 1985 at which new officers must be selected if the club is to continue. Rumors abound about new ATARI 8, 16, and 32-bit machines but we'll have to wait until the January CES to find out the "truth". There are 36 disks in the library which can be borrowed at ACA and there will soon be a set of disks from other groups available. The library is in the "black". ATARI has reconnected their customer service number (408) 745-4851.

AURA Minutes: January 2, 1985

by Rochelle Follender

Discussion: Members are encouraged to actively participate in the club. John Barnes was elected Vice President and Richard Stoll membership secretary. John, and Bill Schadt will handle the library. Current Notes will cost \$1.20/member/issue for 1985. A report on the Las Vegas show will be featured at the February 6 meeting.

Demonstration: Marshall Abrams showed how he adapted ATARIWRITER so the files can be used with a terminal program. He also described his experience trying to get his text editor program published.

AURA Agenda - February 1985

by Bruce McLendon

The next meeting will be Wednesday, the 6th at 7:30 pm at the Long Branch Public Library in meeting room #1, upstairs.

1) Glen Lowe will be offering SSDD Echo disks for \$15.50 in boxes of 10. These are top-quality disks from California. If you can't make it to the meeting, he may be reached at 574-5896 anytime.

2) A slide show of the CES will be presented. There was just so much to see, we could have taken 100's of slides!

The new AURA 'management' is in place and an organized format has been set-up. We plan to have a game/application demonstration, some informal discussions

and announcements. Next month, we'll have a spreadsheet program to do your taxes!

NOTE: See the inside back cover for the names and phone numbers of AURA officers for 1985.

AURA Library Notes

by John Barnes

Bob Bell has given up the position of AURA Librarian to pursue other interests. The contributions that Bob has made to ATARI computing from his librarian position have been innumerable and beyond measure. We hope to see more good software from him. Those of us who have benefited from his generosity wish him nothing but the best.

The challenge of keeping up the flow of free software to a wide audience will be jointly shared by John Barnes and Bill Schadt.

Library procedures will remain unchanged. New disks will be available at monthly meetings for three months following their release. Any AURA member can copy from the Archive disks that are kept at Applied Computer Associates. You can keep the archive copies for a week after leaving your AURA library card as a hostage.

The archives have been enhanced by the addition of approximately 40 sides from the Columbus Atari Enthusiasts. We expect to extract some of the better stuff for the AURA distribution discs. Disc 38 will be available at the February meeting. The disc will include 2 educational math drills, a modification to the Atariwriter Op System for saving formatted text to disc, and others.

Pending projects include distribution (on disc) of Mike DeLucia's documentation project, and a disc distribution of the entire library catalog. These projects are designed to enhance the educational value of the library.

Over the past three years we have seen significant changes in the commercial Atari software market. Quality products for serious computing are now reasonably priced, and functionality is very good. Similar trends are evident in entertainment software. User group libraries, such as AURA's, provide software that the user can understand as well as use. The educational value of this software is often very high. The entertainment side is not neglected, either. Many of the games will provide hours of entertainment for the cost of the disc media alone. The library cannot, of course, function without contributions. We hope that the past generosity of the users will continue. You can show your appreciation for the contributions of others by using the material in your library or by helping Bill and John with projects like improving the documentation, evaluation, and cataloguing of programs.

Executive Committee Meeting

by Marshall Abrams

The A.U.R.A. Executive Committee met on Sunday, January 13th to review status and plan the coming year's

activities. One result was to poll the membership as to their interests and willingness to serve the group.

The following committees were identified. Members are encouraged to join at least one. We are looking for new members interested in learning how they can contribute as well as more experienced members: newsletter, hardware (at meetings), membership, meeting programs, library, education, Atari liaison, sponsor liaison, telephone (calling) tree.

The general structure for meetings will include at least one presentation/demonstration in the game and application categories, a question and answer session, a library demonstration, and a special topic of the evening.

At the February meeting the special topic will be the report from the Consumer Electronic Show. In March we will feature Income Tax preparation using a spreadsheet and a dedicated program.

CPM

Capital ATR Peripheral Micro-Users Group

February Meeting

The next ATR meeting is scheduled for February 26, 1985, at 6:30 p.m. (the fourth Tuesday of the month). The preliminary topic scheduled for discussion is advanced dBASE II applications.

Past Events

The ATR Micro-Users January program consisted of two topics: Perfect Writer - an advanced word processor and Turbo Pascal by Borland. Both reviews were conducted by Frank Jones.

Also discussed was the progress being made in setting up the BBS. It is expected that some time in early February the BBS will be operational. Members will be notified. One finally group purchase of the DT-80 cartridge will be made. Those interested must contact BOB KELLY no later than February 7, 1985.

dBase II Installation Tip

With thanks to Dave Stoughton, a member of the club, the following tip is supplied regarding dBase II. Inverse video capability may be installed on dBase II for the ATR8000/ATARI 800 while in full screen operations. This is done by entering appropriate command sequences when prompted by the dBase "INSTALL" program.

After some experimentation, I found that the following escape sequences, expressed as hexadecimal values, yield a satisfactory display. I used the SWP Auto-Term 80 column software; presumably these sequences will work with 80 column boards as well.

Switch to normal video (item 4): 1B 28 08

Switch to reverse video (item 5): 1B 29 08

Exit full-screen editing mode (item 7): 1B 3D 37 20 1B 28 08

Reset screen after full-screen operations (item 8): 2B 28 08

Note that 08 is the hexadecimal value for ASCII backspace. I am not sure why this character is needed after the ATR8000 escape sequences to disable or enable inverse video; but without its use in the INSTALL command sequences as I have indicated, the full screen mode display will be unsatisfactory.

A good test for correct installation is to type in the command MODIFY STRUCTURE after USEing a temporary file, where loss of data would not be disastrous. Also, try some SAY...GET commands, and finally MODIFY COMMAND <command-file-name>.

For a somewhat different effect, try exchanging the command sequences for items 4 and 5.

Use care when installing the inverse video, as specification of incorrect sequences will result in garbled, unuseable displays when in the full-screen mode. If desired, the installed inverse video sequences may be removed by reloading the "INSTALL" program and specifying system "C" (ADM-3A).

NACUG

National Capital Atari Users Group

Club News

By Peter Kilcullen

Disk Librarian. National Capital Atari needs a new disk librarian. Our present librarian, Jay Gerber, has had to relinquish the honor because of other demands on his time. Thanks Jay for contributing your time and ideas to make a better library for all of us. National Capital Atari has a great disk library; and as librarian you have immediate access to all the latest contributions by members as well as the various magazine programs which we receive on disk. All duplication is done by a commercial copy service so there's no wear and tear on your disk drive. Your responsibility is to have the copies made and to bring them to the club meetings on the third Tuesday (evening) of each month.

Wares Swap. National Capital Atari is sponsoring a "wares" swap, sell, trade, at its March meeting (March 19). Bring your hardware or software for trade, sell, whatever!!! Only one restriction, please. Commercial software MUST be original disks; no pirate programs!! WE cannot condone pirating of software. The prices are high; but things are getting better. People like Russ Wetmore (SYSOP of the Comuserve Atari SIG and author of HOMEPACK) have the right

idea by offering three programs for under \$50 (HOMEPAK is available for about \$33 at the discount houses).

Miscellany. National Capital Atari has received a 501(c)(7) tax exemption from the I.R.S. Frank Huband showed us a pair of remote control joysticks for Atari (\$19.95 at Toys-R-Us) at the December meeting. The recent programs have focused on educational software. Gee, its hard to find GOOD high school level software for Atari!! We need some good reviews of what's available at this level, or else some creative minds to write it.

NOVATARI

Northern Virginia Atari Users Group

Minutes, January Meeting

Program. The announced topic of our January meeting, a demonstration of MOVIE MAKER from Reston, had to be changed since the speaker as well as many of her coworkers were laid off. Reston is, apparently backing away from the computer book market and returning to publishing primarily text books.

Although we didn't see MOVIE MAKER (that program will be rescheduled), we were treated to an excellent presentation on telecommunications by Mike Young. Since Mike had attended the recent CES, we were treated to a first-hand account of the new Ataris before he launched into his animated presentation of the intricacies of modulation and demodulation. Thanks Mike for one of the best programs of the year.

Elections. Palmer Pyle announced the slate of candidates for NOVATARI officers for 1985. Joe Waters was nominated for President, Jim Stevenson for Vice-President, Curtis Sandler for Treasurer, and Terry White for Secretary. Anyone who would like to run or has any further suggestions can give Palmer a call (437-3883). Elections will be held at the February meeting.

NPX. Jim Stevenson announced a new entry in the Novatari Program Exchange, Joe Waters' WORD BUILDER priced at \$8. Joe gave a brief demonstration of his program and then it was offered as one of the door prizes. The first entry had come the previous month when Jim Stevenson Jr. gave us an excellent graphics disk with Visualizer-based Dark Crystal pictures on one side and Star-Wars pictures on the back. The disk included a driver program that automatically sequenced through the available pictures. It is priced at \$4.00. If you have a program you would like to submit to NPX or have any questions, please call Jim Stevenson (703) 378-4093.

NOVATARI College

by Marty Vallery

We have found an excellent site for our ATARI courses: the ATARI computer lab at Lake Braddock High School. Lake Braddock HS is located off of Burke Lake Road in Burke, Virginia. Interest in the courses was strong at the

January meeting. We got a large enough enrollment to schedule the beginning Atari BASIC course and the beginning ASSEMBLY language course. The BASIC course, taught by Joe Waters, consists of three two-hour sessions scheduled one week apart (Jan.29, Feb. 5, and Feb.12). The ASSEMBLY course will consist of two three-hour sessions (Feb.19 and Feb. 22). Both courses cost \$20.

We are offering a variety of courses or seminars. When we have a sufficient enrollment, a course will be scheduled. Other seminars available include Word Processing, Telecommunications, Spread Sheets, Data Base Management Systems, Introduction to Disk Drives, Atari Graphics, and Atari Sound. These seminars are scheduled as two-hour evening sessions and cost \$5.. If you are interested in any of these courses, or would like further information, call Marty Vallery, at (703) 425-6832.

Education Report

by Diana Bardt

The first NOVATARI Educational Disk was made available to NOVATARI members at the December meeting. This disk of Public Domain Educational programs was also given to Fairfax County School system to be reviewed by the Department of Instructional Technology. Once this disk is approved, individual schools can request a copy through the Fairfax County School System. We hope to provide more public domain educational programs to the Fairfax County Schools as they become available to NOVATARI members.

New SIG Started for BASIC XL

by Terry White

At the January 13 meeting of NOVATARI, I announced the start of a special interest group to work with OSS's BASIC XL, an enhanced BASIC language available on cartridge and diskette in a runtime version.

BASIC XL adds 48 new statements and functions to the already powerful Atari BASIC library. If you buy the toolkit disk, you gain another six commands making your programs much more powerful, easier to read, and much faster. This SIG will help you learn this powerful language, translate your current BASIC programs and discuss the enormous possibilities available. Hopefully, we will be able to introduce new, original programs into the NOVATARI disk library and make them available to all members.

If you would like to join or would like more information contact Terry White at (703) 849-1725 (Vienna, VA).

NOVATARI Membership Drive

by Terry White

Do you know of a store you frequent that would have space to put up a flyer calling attention to NOVATARI? Or how about a store that would sell Current Notes on consignment?

We are now on a membership drive promoting the club in as many diverse ways as possible. Flyers designed by Joe Waters have been distributed to county libraries, supermarket bulletin boards, community center boards and to stores selling Atari software and hardware. (Future Tech, Springfield; Family Computer Center, Fair Oaks; Program Store, Seven Corners). Notices were shown on the Media General and Reston Warner Amex Cable system.

I have in mind other ways of letting new Atari owners know we exist such as flea markets for the clubs in this area, announcements on radio, and more tv, newspaper notices under 'community affairs'. There are lots of ways to do this and we will need everyone's help. If you have a friend who owns an Atari, be sure to tell him or her about our club. Please call me, Terry White, with any suggestions you might have, (703) 849-1725 (Vienna, VA). PASS THE WORD.

February Meeting

Our February meeting is slated for Sunday the 10th. Although we are not yet sure just who the speaker will be, we would like to have a program to discuss "Atari in the Schools." We have renewed our lease on the Greenbriar Community Center for three more months. Prices, however, have gone up considerably (from \$6 to \$10 per hour). The meetings, therefore, will be scheduled to run from 5:30 to 8:30. The first hour will be devoted to sales and exchanges. Club library disks, ANALOG and ANTIC disks, NPX disks as well as blank diskettes and other usefull goodies will be available. A swap shop is available at every meeting, so if you have something you would like to sell, be sure to bring it (original material only, of course). The second hour will be devoted to announcements, demonstrations, and door prizes. The final hour will be for the main program. If someone has a suggestion for an alternative meeting place, contact Terry White.

WACUG

Hoodbridge Atari Users' Group

Some good news, some bad news and some good news. The first good news is that WACUG's ranks have been swelled by the addition of over twenty new members during the months of December and January - many of whom are new ATARI owners and all of whom are most welcome. The bad news - Marc Hubbard, citing added responsibilities on the job and family travel plans, has found it necessary to resign his position as First Vice President. The second bit of good news - the board has elected Dave Marrantette to fill the vacancy caused by Marc's resignation. Dave has been active in the group since mid-1983, a frequent contributor to "OUTPUT", the newsletter formerly produced by WACUG, and the president of an ATARI users' group in Europe prior to his return to the States.

Among the items on the agenda for our February meeting will be demonstrations of a number of printer utilities from the WACUG public domain library and several advanced uses of the ATARIWRITER word processor. We'll also demo

some of the new products reaching the shelves in the six weeks between this writing and February 27th. Also, the swap table session we held at our January meeting will become a monthly feature. So, if you've got any old soft/hardware gathering dust somewhere - bring it along. It might be just the thing someone else is looking for!!

We'll be taking orders to initiate or extend subscriptions to "ANALOG" at users' group discount rates - \$24.00 per year rather than \$28. If we can get ten or more new subscriptions or renewals the publishers will allow the group to extend it's disk-version subscription at a much reduced fee and to duplicate the disks for subscriber/members. Neither "ANTIC" nor "COMPUTE!" offers users' group discounts, but you can subscribe to "COMPUTE!" thru Publisher's Clearing House at only \$12.00 per year - a 50% discount off the normal price. If interested in "ANALOG", and I hope you are, bring your checkbook. If you're planning to extend a current subscription, also bring along the address label from your most recent copy.

CAVEAT: Readers of the income tax spreadsheet article in February's "ANTIC" should take note that the reference to a disk containing all twelve of the spreadsheet templates does NOT refer to the disk-version of "ANTIC's" February edition. It refers to a another ANTIC product which must be ordered direct from the publisher. The article refers to a "nearby" order form, which I couldn't find - but the template disk is mentioned in the joint ANTIC/SYNAPSE add appearing on page 34. It is priced at \$15.00.

Finally, new (and old) members interested in courses on BASIC, word processing, spreadsheets, etc., should watch the NOVATARI column for information on reasonably-priced seminars offered on these and other topics.

Classified Ads

CENTRONICS PRINTER FOR SALE. Centronics 739 with proportional spacing and graphics. Also includes TOF command & reverse platten rotation for special applications. Mobius loop ribbon for extended printing. Original cost was \$525, sacrifice at \$200 with cable from 850 interface to printer and graphic software. See Bruce at the AURA meeting or drop a line to the AURA PD box 7761 in Silver Spring, MD 20907. If you want to call, try after 10 pm at 587-7890.

Classified ads are free to members of the Washington Area ACE. Call Joe Waters, 430-1215 (H) or 450-6015 (W) prior to 15th day of the preceeding month. P.S. if you have Atari equipment you want to sell, considering the drastic price reductions that have taken place, you might consider donating that equipment to your favorite group, school, charity, etc. You might do better on your income taxes than you would selling the items.

Washington Area Atari Computer EnthusiastsAtari Users' Regional Association

President..... Marshall Abrams 588-1005
 Vice President John Barnes.... 652-0667
 Treasurer..... Richard Stoll.. 946-8435
 Corr. Sec..... Bruce McLendon. 587-7890
 Membership.... William Pimble. 341-9572
 Librarian..... William Schadt. 622-1547
 Hardware Coord Moe Sherman.... 593-1076

Meetings: 1st Wednesday of every month, 7:00 pm, Room One, Long Branch Public Library, Garland Avenue, East Silver Spring, MD. Take the Beltway (I-495) to Exit 29-B, South University Blvd. East, (Route 193). Follow University Blvd. East to 2nd light (Piney Branch Road), turn right on Piney Branch Road, continue to 2nd light (Arless Street), turn right on Arless past the apartments to Garland Avenue, turn right on Garland. The Long Branch Library is on the corner. Park in the library's lot.

New Members: Dues are \$15/year (includes subscription to Current Notes). Mail check, payable to AURA, to Treasurer, AURA, P.O. Box 7761, Silver Spring, MD 20907.

Capital ATR Peripheral Micro-Users Group

President... Bob Kelly..... 301/839-7377
 VP-Programs. John Lauer.... 703/698-1243
 VP-Commo.... Bob Danson.... 703/780-0758
 VP-Finances. H. Carpentier. 301/630-4945

Meetings: 4th Tuesday of every month, 6:30 pm, Author Room, Public Library, Oxon Hill, Maryland. The Library is located near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge just off the Washington beltway. Take the beltway to Maryland exit #4 East (St. Barnabas Road). St. Barnabas Road merges immediately with Oxon Hill Rd.; proceed 1/4 mile and Library will be on your left. The Library telephone number is 301-839-2400.

New Members: Dues are \$15/year (includes a subscription to Current Notes) or \$3/year (no subscription). Send check, payable to John Lauer, to John Lauer, 8127 Heatherton Lane, Apt. 204, Vienna, VA 22180.

National Capital Atari Users' Group

President.. Frank Huband... 703/527-4770
 Treasurer.. Allen H. Lerman 301/460-0289
 Membership. Gerald Whitmore 301/459-6164
 Programs... Art Corte..... 703/437-7860
 V-Programs. Jim Campbell... 703/425-1440
 Tape Lib... Bruce Ingalls.. 703/430-3287

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of every month, 5:30-8:30, Room 543, National Science Foundation offices, 1800 G. Street NW, Washington, DC. The closest subway stop is Farragut West, on the Blue and Orange lines. Take the 18th Street exit, and walk south (against the flow of traffic) down 18th Street for three blocks to G street. The building, on the corner of 18th and G, can be identified by a sign for the

Madison National Bank on the corner. Parking is available in the building for a fee. The front entrance is on the west side of 18th street, between F and G.

New Members: Dues are \$15 (includes subscription to Current Notes) or \$5 (no subscription). Send checks, payable to National Capital Atari Users Group, to Allen Lerman, 14905 Waterway Drive, Rockville, MD 20853.

Northern Virginia Atari Users Group

President..... Joe Waters..... 430-1215
 Vice President. Steve Steinberg 435-2962
 Treasurer..... Curtis Sandler. 734-9533
 Secretary..... Jim Stevenson.. 378-4093
 Programs/NPX... Gene Schimpf... 378-7807
 Membership..... Earl Lilley.... 281-9017
 Training..... Marty Vallery.. 425-6832
 Education..... Diana Burdt.... 425-5073
 Disk Librarian. M. Evan Brooks. 354-4482

Meetings: 2nd Sunday of each month, 5:30-8:30, Greenbriar Community Center, 4615 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly, VA. Stringfellow Road, (Route 645), runs south from US 50 about 2 1/2 miles west of Fair Oaks Shopping Mall (I-66 and 50). The Greenbriar Community Center is 1.4 miles south of 50. Small parking lot in front, larger one just north of Center. 5 to 6:30: general discussion, product sales, ad hoc demos; 6:30 -7:00 business meeting; 7:00-7:30 product demos, door prizes; 7:30-8:30 program.

New Members: Dues are \$15 (includes subscription to Current Notes) or \$5 (no subscription). Send checks, payable to Novatari, to Curtis Sandler, 7213 Idylwood Ct., Falls Church, VA 22043.

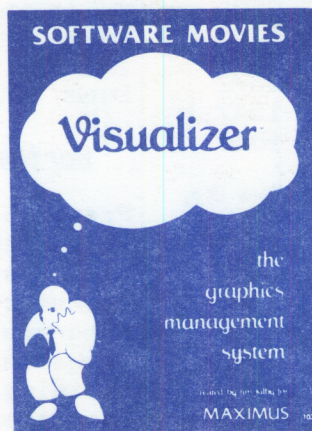
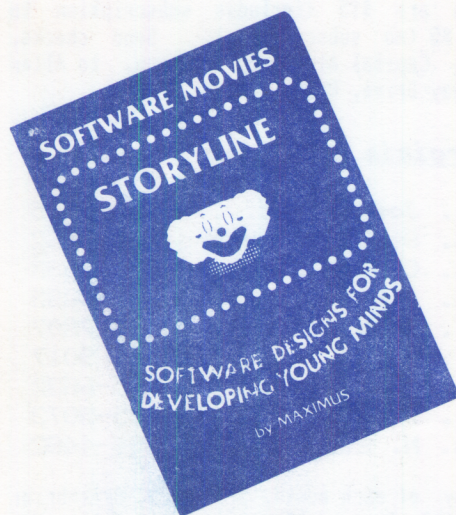
Hoodbridge Atari Users Group

President.... Jack Holtzhauer. 670-6475
 First VP.... Dave Marrandette 670-7675
 VP-Education. Tim Mitchell.... 221-7722
 VP-Liaison... Cecil Alton..... 670-4842
 Secretary.... Mike Stringer... 786-8755
 Treasurer.... John Thomas..... 670-8645
 Librarian.... Arnie Turk..... 670-2547

Meetings: Monthly, 7 - 10 pm, Community Room, Potomac Branch, Prince William County Library, Optiz Blvd., Woodbridge, VA. Meeting dates: Wed, FEB 27; Wed, MAR 27; Wed, APR 24; Wed, MAY 15; and Wed, JUN 19. Entering Woodbridge from either North or South on Route #1, proceed to the intersection of Route #1 and Optiz Blvd. (adjacent to Woodbridge Lincoln-Mercury). Turn West onto Optiz and take first left turn into the library's parking lot. The Community Room is located to your left immediately upon entering the main building.

New Members: Dues are \$10/year plus \$1 monthly dues (includes subscription to Current Notes). Send checks, payable to WACUG, to Mike Stringer, 709 Rutherford Dr., Fredericksburg, VA 22401.

What do you call a software line that combines education, recreation & innovation?



How about a sensation!

STORYLINE makes bedtime, or anytime, funtime. Clover the Clown narrates two fairytale favorites, RUMPELSTILTSKIN and THE UGLY DUCKLING, accompanied by four games that reinforce the morals of the stories: Promises, Promises, Guess My Name, Pick the Twins, and Duck Puzzle.

Retail: \$39.95
Ages 4 to 10

VISUALIZER turns your Atari computer into a full-featured slide projector, allowing you to create audio-visual presentations in just minutes! It's a low-cost way to produce animated color graphics and text WITH SOUND, letting you create everything from charts to arts.

Retail: \$49.95
Audio Option: \$19.95
Ages 5 to Adult

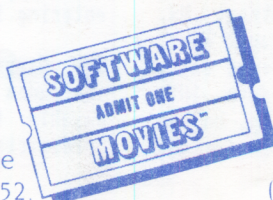
SAFETYLINE combines fun with important lessons about safety. Narrated by Max the Cat, SAFETYLINE shows your child how to cross streets safely and what to do when lost. Four intriguing games reinforce the safety tips presented in the safety stories: Streetcross, Hidden Tips, Tip-match and Zoomaze.

Retail: \$39.95
Ages 4 to 8

Software Movies by MAXIMUS. It's the exciting, stimulating, interactive, educational entertainment system for the entire family that's way ahead of its class!

What exactly is a Software Movie? It's a computer generated story with high resolution animated graphics, CompuSync™ soundtrack narration, original music, and interactive play that takes computer learning into a whole new dimension!

Software Movies are compatible with any 48K Atari computer system with disk drive and cassette program recorder. (Recorder optional with VISUALIZER.)



Call toll-free
(800) 368-2152.

Virginia call
(703) 734-4200.

Additional dealer/distributor inquiries are invited.